

**Policing Dyslexia: An examination of the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers in England and Wales.**

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## **Abstract**

The experiences of dyslexic adults in education as well as the 'caring professions' of nursing, teaching and social work continue to be fertile ground for academic study. This study extends the range of current academic knowledge of dyslexia in the workplace by exploring the experiences of dyslexic police officers across England and Wales. The context is the extension of disability-related equality legislation to the police service in 2004. The overarching aim of the study is to examine the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers who are 'on-the-streets' and not in the classroom environment. This research is underpinned by the principles of the social model of disability (Oliver 1990) and in it, dyslexia is understood not as a stand-alone difference but rather as an aspect of neurodiversity (Cooper 2009)

A qualitative and exploratory research strategy was adopted. Data was collected by way of self-completed questionnaires and from face-to-face semi-structured interviews with twenty-five serving or recently resigned dyslexic police officers from ten police services from across England and Wales. The data was analysed using Layder's theory of domains and his adaptive theory (Layder 2005 & 2013).

This study identified that the overwhelming majority of dyslexic police officers experienced a broad range of attitudinal, procedural and police 'barriers' to their full integration into the police organisation. All of the participants in this study had disclosed to their employing police service that they were dyslexic. Participant understanding of dyslexia and disability was deeply rooted within the medical model rather than the social model. The study identified substantial evidence of bullying, and discrimination was identified across the broad range of police services as well as significant failings in the provision of workplace assessments by Job Centre staff. Despite this treatment very few participants complained or sought redress. The dominance of the medical model of disability in wider society, together with negative aspects of police 'occupational' culture, were identified as key factors in the participants' decision making processes. This research concludes that institutional disablism in terms of dyslexia is widespread across some police services in England and Wales despite the extension of the disability discrimination legislation to the police service. The research concludes with some recommendations for policy and practice.

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In 2005 I completed my MA and decided to pursue the possibility of a PhD. I was given the name of a professor at DMU who might be interested in supervising me. His name is Brian Williams. Brian was the first real-life professor that I had met. My first meeting with Brian turned out to be my interview. At the end of the interview Brian asked me if I wanted to 'change the world?' I replied that I did. It was only at Brian's funeral that I finally realised why he invested so much time and patience on me. Only two days before his tragic and untimely death he waited for me to finish teach (late as usual) and took me to the pub for a drink and a chat. I miss Brian very much, I often think about him and as I write this final few words of this thesis I wonder what he would think of it? I am as passionate about this research as I was on the day that I met him. Brian: I remain committed to 'changing the world', not all of it of course but by challenging prejudice and discrimination by raising awareness of adult dyslexia and supporting those who are treated unfairly.

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## Glossary

A-to-W	Access to Work
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
Centrex	Central Police Training and Development Agency
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DEA	Disability Employment Advisor
DMU	De Montfort University
DSA	Disabled Students Allowance
EAT	Employment Appeal Tribunal
ET	Employment Tribunal
FDP	Foundation Degree in Policing
GPA	Gay Police Association
MG11	Police Witness Statement Form
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NPIA	National Policing Improvement Agency (Now College of Policing)
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
PDU	Professional development Unit
PNB	Pocket Note Book
PTP	Probationer Training Programme
SMD	Social Model of Disability
SOLAP	Student Officer Learning and Assessment Portfolio

## Chapter One: Introduction, Rationale and Context

### 1.1 Introduction

When this current study began I would have suggested that my interest and understanding of dyslexia could be traced back to the autumn of 2000. As a police officer engaged in the training of police recruits, I encountered a student police officer who described how she was experiencing great difficulty in the writing of statements and learning definitions by rote. The student told me that she 'had' dyslexia. This was the first time that I can recall ever hearing this word and I could not spell it. This is where my research began but it is not the start of my journey, a journey that I will return to later in this chapter. I provided extensive one-to-one coaching with the student who 'had' dyslexia and she successfully completed her initial training course. This chance interaction led me to read about dyslexia and to try to understand what it was. I completed a Certificate in Post-Compulsory Education (Cert Ed) in the hope that I would learn more about dyslexia, but dyslexia was not discussed. By chance I found an internet website for a university in the East Midlands of the United Kingdom that offered a Master of Arts Degree in Dyslexia Studies. I contacted the programme leader and as a result I completed a Master of Arts not in Dyslexia Studies but in Education, with a strong focus upon dyslexia in police training and education. It was during a summer school in 2003 that it was suggested that I complete a dyslexia screening by a peer student. To my shock and surprise the screening indicated that I was dyslexic.

A dyslexia assessment followed in the same year and I was formally diagnosed as dyslexic. This occurred three years after I had first heard the term dyslexia and three years after I had started to provide weekly dyslexia and learning support drop-in sessions at the regional police training centre at Ryton-on-Dunsmore in Warwickshire. Prior to being identified as dyslexic I felt a strong connection and resonance with the experiences and descriptions of difficulties expressed by the many hundreds of dyslexic student police officers who

attended the voluntary and confidential drop-in sessions. I could empathise and felt that in many ways I *understood* what they were describing. Upon completion of the MA studies I used my new knowledge and understanding to deliver a large number of dyslexia awareness workshops to police services and police training centres across England and Wales (See Hill, 2004, 2005b, 2006b, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010b 2011). The focus of my studies to this point had been dyslexia in the police learning and work environments.

I was contacted by many dozens of student police officers who had left the training environment but who were experiencing difficulties in the operational police role<sup>1</sup>. Many of these officers reported that they had experienced difficulty in text-based activities as well as being bullied. In 2005 I made the decision to undertake a PhD study to explore the experiences and perceptions of a group of dyslexic police officers from across England and Wales. One key driver for this decision was that on occasions where I attempted to intervene and support the dyslexic police officers, I was advised that I was not an 'expert'; on one memorable occasion I was advised by a manager that as a police sergeant I 'was nothing more than an interested amateur'. I was angry and frustrated at hearing the countless accounts of discriminatory behaviours described by many of the dyslexic police officers. I made a commitment to undertake this study in the full knowledge that I was walking into the 'lion's den': a dyslexic researcher undertaking a doctoral level study with all of the associated expectation of high level literacy skills.

Undaunted, I commenced this current study in 2005 and at the same time I was awarded a Bramshill Police Research Scholarship in support of this research focus by Centrex, the Central Police Training and Development Authority. Unfortunately my employing police

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<sup>1</sup> The term operational policing in the context of this study should be understood as police officers outside of the classroom environment and attending incidents reported by the public. These include such activities as dealing with road traffic collisions, shoplifting and assaults.

service refused to support this study and required that it be undertaken in my own time and during periods of annual leave only (Personal Communication 2005). In 2006 I took early retirement from the police service and began my academic career at a university in the United Kingdom. The financial cost of leaving the police service five years early was significant. It was a very difficult decision to make. I was, and I remain, fully committed to exploring the experiences of dyslexic police officers and others in employment despite the significant financial losses that my family and I have experienced and which will remain long after this study is completed. At the heart of this study is a personal and professional desire to both explore and better understand the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers who are out on the street, undertaking operational duties across England and Wales.

I suggested earlier that this study was rooted in my chance encounter with the dyslexic police recruit in 2000. In truth this journey did not begin in the autumn of the year 2000 but more accurately in the summer of 1978. This is the year that I joined the Royal Military Police and from my very first day I experienced significant difficulty in both the learning environment and on operational duties. I could not remember the definitions which were taught through rote learning and my spelling, grammar and handwriting caused a high degree of embarrassment and difficulty with the public, my peers and managers both within the military and civil police environments. On occasions my poor literacy skills jeopardised the delivery of justice through the court system, due to poor statements and reports, and yet I received many of letters of praise from the public regarding my engagement with them beyond the written word. It was these letters that encouraged me to continue as a police officer and to continue to work hard in text-based activities within the police service.

My empathy and connection with the dyslexic student police officers in 2000 can now be understood in the context of my own experiences of training and on operational duties as a

military police officer and as a police constable and Sergeant. My support for the dyslexic police students in and beyond the training environment predates my own suspicions or diagnosis of dyslexia and is rooted in my life-long commitment to ethical practice, which in turn is directly underpinned by egalitarian beliefs.

## **1.2 The Context of this Study**

The context of this study is the police service of England and Wales, a service that has been the subject of significant research and criticism in recent decades due to its treatment of people both within (staff – service providers) and outside (the public – service users) who are from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, the gay community and women (Macpherson 1999; Loftus 2009; Holdaway & O'Neill 2007). One section of society was specifically excluded from becoming police officers until 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004. On this date the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 was amended to include police officers within the scope of disability-related anti-discrimination legislation of the United Kingdom for the first time (DDAAR 2003). Prior to this date, applicants to the police service who disclosed a disability could have their application declined in England and Wales (DRC 2003).

Dyslexia was recognised as being an impairment covered by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, but was more fully included within guidance documents associated with the enactment of the DDAAR 2003 (ibid). In 2007 Chief Inspector David Paterson of the Metropolitan Police won a landmark victory against his employers on the grounds of disability (dyslexia) discrimination at an Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT 2007). This case was followed by other police officers from across England and Wales who were found to have been victims of dyslexia-related discrimination by their employing police services (Brooking v Essex Police 2008 and Haynes v Gloucestershire police 2009 - See Chapter Two).

Statistical data concerning the number of dyslexic police officers in England and Wales is not currently collected by the Home Office or individual police services, and so the exact number of dyslexic police officers remains unknown (Avon & Somerset Police 2013). One source of data that has come to light during the later stages of this study is more fully explored in Chapter Three. The data comes from a Higher Education Institution in the East Midlands that has been responsible for the training and education of police officers since 2006. The data suggests that at least forty percent of student police officers have been assessed as dyslexic either during or prior to the course (Sharpe 2013).

This study takes place during a period where police officers and their employers are subject to the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998, The Disability Discrimination Act 1995, 2005 and the Equality Act 2010. It takes place at a time when the police service has been labelled as 'institutionally racist' (Macpherson 1999) and at a time when studies show that sexism and homophobia are a significant factor within the dominant and highly influential police occupational culture (Loftus 2008; 2009). In order to better understand the sometimes subtle and nuanced - or at other times blunt and hostile - power relations at play within the hierarchical and insular setting of the police service, Layder's domain theory is used to investigate and unpack the complexity of interactions and power (Layder 2005; 2013).

As I have stated previously, I am not an outsider seeking to explore the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers but rather an insider, or perhaps a better term would be a double-insider. I am both dyslexic and at the start of this study a police officer. I cannot stand outside and 'look inside', nor can I conduct a 'smash and grab' exercise where I obtain the accounts from the participant in this study and then walk away. I am clearly not a neutral observer and so this study is both informed by and underpinned by a commitment to

actively involve dyslexic police officers in the study in any way possible. This commitment to the principles of participatory research is more fully explored in Chapter Three.

In addition to my commitment to inclusion and participation is recognition of alternative models of disability. Models help us to understand concepts and ideas but do not necessarily explain them. On this basis the Social Model of Disability is used as a scaffold upon which this study is constructed (Oliver 1990). The Social Model of Disability as espoused by Oliver argues that disability is both socially constructed and maintained through the erection of attitudinal, physical and institutional barriers which prevent and inhibit people with an impairment from engaging in education, recreation and employment (ibid). The Social Model of Disability is more fully considered in Chapter Two and an explanation as to how the principles of the model are applied to this study is included in Chapter Three. In order to understand the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers, a qualitative and exploratory study has been designed, which allows for the capture of rich and thick descriptions of their experiences (David and Sutton 2011: 11). This important decision is more fully explained in Section 3.2.3.

### **Summary of Chapter One:**

As a dyslexic adult who has served with both the military and civilian police services of the United Kingdom, I believe that I am in a unique position to conduct this qualitative and exploratory study. The aim of the study is to explore the thoughts, feelings and experiences of a sample of dyslexic police officers from police services across England and Wales. It takes place at a time when the police services are under increased scrutiny, following allegations and findings of institutional discrimination. The extension of disability discrimination legislation to include the police service has resulted in a small, but growing number of police services being found guilty by employment tribunals of disability-related discrimination in terms of their treatment of dyslexic police officers. The study is informed by the Social Model of Disability and the approach is participatory. Domain theory is used to better understand the often complex relationships between the individual dyslexic police officer, the police service and wider society.



## Chapter Two: The Literature in the Research Context

### 2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I set out the rationale and context for this study. In this second chapter I critically examine both historical and contemporary literature from across a broad range of disciplines which include: Psychology, Sociology, Education, Criminology and Neuroscience. This chapter begins with an exploration of dyslexia and its origins and continues with an examination of attempts to define dyslexia throughout the last century. The chapter continues by examining the concept of disability and seeks to answer the question which I continue to be frequently asked: *'is dyslexia a disability?'* This question is considered in terms of the anti-discrimination legislation of England and Wales as well as through the lens of the Social Model of Disability (Oliver 1990) and from a Neurodiversity perspective (Cooper 2009; Pollak 2009). Prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination in terms of dyslexia and disability are then examined and considered the macro, societal and micro levels by considering these concepts against a backdrop of police 'canteen' sub-culture. Disclosure of dyslexia is considered in the contexts of Higher Education and Employment environments. Sources and routes to support systems and processes are then reviewed. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key concepts identified in the literature. From this summary I set out the questions which this research seeks to answer.

### 2.2 Dyslexia –Definitions, Descriptions and Characteristics

In the hundred and twenty plus years since Rudolf Berlin first coined the term *dyslexia* there has been an unrelenting desire in the academy and medical professions to define dyslexia beyond the initial description of 'word blindness' (Wagner 1973: 58). I do not intend to catalogue the evolution of the definitions beyond what is necessary to inform this study and to signpost readers to alternative authoritative historical and contemporary sources. The origins of the term dyslexia can be traced to Rudolf Berlin, an ophthalmologist (Ibid). In

England the first documented use of the term dyslexia was again by a medical doctor, W. Pringle Morgan in the British Medical Journal in 1896 (Snowling 1996). Since these early days both the medical and educational professions have engaged in attempts both to define dyslexia and in many instances have sought to identify its cause or causes (Rice & Brooks 2004).

Despite over one hundred and twenty years of research and study, a definition or explanation of dyslexia which is universally accepted remains elusive (Rice & Brooks 2004, Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002). One should not be surprised by the apparent failure to achieve a consensus on a unifying definition. Definitions of dyslexia are subjective; they are developed in terms of the use to which they are applied (Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002: 3). Until relatively recently the majority of definitions of dyslexia could be divided into three general categories: descriptive definitions, causal explanations or an amalgam of both description and causal factors (ibid: 137). Descriptive definitions include those of advocacy groups including the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) who, for example, define dyslexia as:

“Dyslexia is best described as a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect the learning processes in one or more of reading, spelling, and writing. Accompanying weaknesses may be identified in areas of speed of processing, short-term memory, sequencing and organization, auditory and /or visual perception, spoken language and motor skills. It is particularly related to mastering and using written language, which may include alphabetic, numeric and musical notation” (BDA 2002).

This broad and descriptive definition clearly sets out the range of characteristics often described by dyslexic adults both in education and employment (Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002). There is a brief recognition of ability; nevertheless the underpinning message of this definition is one of difficulty and very specifically a range of difficulties which are located *within* the dyslexic adult. The second type of definition, frequently offered by medical

researchers, seeks to focus upon the causes of dyslexia. An example of this type of definition is:

“A complex biologically-rooted behavioural condition resulting from impairment of reading-related processes (phonological skills, automatized lexical retrieval and verbal short-term memory, in any combination) and manifest in difficulties related to the mastery of reading up to the level of population norms under the condition of adequate education and a normal developmental environment” (Stein 2001: 24)

As with the previous definition, Stein locates the dyslexia and its associated difficulties within the brain of individuals and goes further by suggesting that the cause of dyslexia is both biological and the result of an impairment (Stein 2001: 24). The third type of definition, frequently encountered, combines descriptive characteristics with causal factors. This type of definition is often espoused by practitioners be they educationalists or psychologists. An example of this type of definition is that of Dyslexia Action who define dyslexia as:

“Dyslexia is a specific type of learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. Characteristics of dyslexia include difficulties areas such as phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed. Dyslexia is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category and there are no clear cut off points....It is biological in origin and is defined as a lack of phonological awareness, which is an ability to convert letter combinations to sounds and vice versa” (Dyslexia Action 2013)

This third type of definition combines the often visible or identifiable behavioural characteristics with an underlying cause or basis for those characteristics. One common aspect of the three definitions is that they firmly locate the difficulties experienced by dyslexic adults within the individual. The primary focus of this current research is to explore the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers; adult dyslexic individuals in an employment setting. On this basis I see little value in devoting significant time and space in this thesis to biological, genetic or neurological causal factors other than to acknowledge

that this remains a significant area of international research. Examples of contemporary areas of dyslexia related studies include that of Stoodley and Stein (2011) whose focus is the role of the cerebellum in dyslexia whereas for Nicolson, Fawcett, Brooks and Needle (2010) the focus continues to be in further developing phonological deficit theory. Whilst research that seeks to identify dyslexia at the genetic or broader biological level is clearly interesting to some in the academy it is not what drives or motivates me or this current research. What it does of course, is remind us that there is a great deal of time and energy being invested in trying to find the cause or causes of dyslexia rather than devoting this not insubstantial energy and resources into addressing the barriers experienced by dyslexic people in education, recreation and employment. As Fitzgibbon and O'Connor (2002: 2) confirm:

“Definitions that explain dyslexia in terms of brain research are not an appropriate starting point for defining dyslexia in relation to .....adult dyslexics in the workplace”

Having identified that definitions of dyslexia which include causal factors are not relevant to this current study, I now turn my attention of those definitions and descriptions of dyslexia which provide observable or behavioural characteristics of dyslexia; a definition and description of experiences that is recognisable by dyslexic adults (Morgan & Klein 2000).

As shown in Table 1, McLoughlin, Leather and Stringer (2002: 4) define adult dyslexia in terms of Primary and Secondary characteristics:

Characteristics of Dyslexia	
Primary	Secondary
<b>Organisation:</b> Personal, Work & Learning Time Management Time Keeping	<b>Confidence:</b> Performance below Personal Expectations
<b>Literacy:</b> Word Recognition Reading Fluency Reading Comprehension Spelling Written Comprehension Writing Fluency	<b>Low Self-Confidence:</b> Low Opinion of Self Achievement Undervalued
	<b>Social Interaction:</b> Isolation from Peers Poor Self-Concept
<b>Numeracy:</b> Mental Maths	<b>Anger &amp; Frustration:</b> Treatment both Historical and Present
<b>Social Interaction:</b> Word finding difficulties Slow Language Processing Memory Deficits	<b>Anxiety:</b> General Response to Learning, Assessments & Tests.

Table 1: Primary and Secondary Characteristics of Dyslexia

Describing dyslexia in terms of characteristics is helpful at this point for three important reasons: firstly that it describes observable behaviours of dyslexia that are recognisable to those of us who are dyslexic and for those who engage with dyslexic adults and secondly: because McLoughlin, Leather and Stringer (2002: 3) acknowledge that dyslexia is far more complex than a simple difficulty in acquiring literacy skills and thirdly because this definition of dyslexia introduces an emotional or affective dimension. Despite the identifiable positive features of this description of dyslexia it is not completely satisfactory as a foundation for use in this current study.

What is problematic about the description offered by McLoughlin, Leather and Stringer (2002: 6) and shared by Fitzgibbon and O'Connor (2002: 143) and McLoughlin, Fitzgibbon and Young (1994: 3) are that they all identify the characteristics of dyslexia as *symptoms* of

dyslexia. The word symptom has its origins in the Greek word 'sumptoma' (OED 2013) and is defined as "a physical or mental feature which is regarded as indicating a condition of disease". Clearly dyslexia cannot be considered or thought of as a disease and therefore the use of the word symptom, a well-known and accepted medical term, is both factually incorrect and inappropriate. A further difficulty with terminology is the descriptions of dyslexia in terms of it being a 'condition' or 'disorder'. This is not purely a matter of semantics but an issue of significant concern, since those authors who use such language in publications are also psychologists and other professionals who describe working with dyslexic adults (see Brunswick 2012: 3, Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002: 4). The power of language cannot be underestimated in this context and I will return to this important aspect shortly.

Another difficulty with the model of adult dyslexia espoused by McLoughlin, Leather and Stringer (2002: 5) and Fitzgibbon and O'Connor (2002: 143) is the suggestion that the secondary or affective characteristics or symptoms of dyslexia are a result of the primary characteristics. Once again the difficulties experienced by dyslexic adults are recognised by both groups of practitioners who have significant experience of working with dyslexic adults. What is problematic is that they once again locate the difficulties that the dyslexic adults experience within the individual. As Moody (2009: 5) makes clear "dyslexia is constantly in danger of being medicalised" through the use of language in terms of interactions and in formal assessment reports. In the context of this study the suggestion that dyslexia is a medically based disorder, condition or result of cognitive deficit which is located within the dyslexic adult is strongly rejected.

An alternative standpoint is to see dyslexia not in terms of the previously described and rejected medical or individual models of dyslexia but rather through the lens of a social model. The term, Social Model of Disability, first entered common usage in 1983 from the

works of Mike Oliver (Oliver, 1983). Its roots are firmly located in the politicisation of disability by disabled writers and activists in the early 1960s (Campbell & Oliver, 1996). The Social Model separates, and in so doing, suggests a conceptual distinction between, Disability and Impairment (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002: 3). The social model is fundamentally a heuristic device, a tool to aid the understanding of disability, and intended to empower people who live with impairment and to challenge disablism (Barnes & Mercer 2004: 4).

Oliver (1996: 32) suggests that the *Social Model of Disability* locates the *problem* of disability not with the individual, but in society's response to the differences of the individual(s) who live with impairment. Oliver (ibid) argues that it is society, in the form of disabling barriers and negative attitudes that denies people with impairments the opportunities for fully participating in work, social, educational or recreational activities. The social model locates disability, and therefore, oppression and discrimination (these concepts are fully explored later in this chapter), firmly outside of the individual and specifically within wider society. French (1993: 17) offers clarity when she suggests:

“[Thus] the way to reduce disability is to adjust the social and physical environment to ensure that the needs and rights of people with impairments are met, rather than attempting to change disabled people to fit the existing environment”. French (1993: 17)

In the context of this study the term impairment is understood to mean cognitive or processing difference and not deficit or defect. This important distinction is explained later in this chapter. When dyslexia is viewed through a social model lens the focus point shifts from the individual functional limitations or cognitive difference to problems caused by disabling environments (Macdonald 2009: 349, Cooper 2009: 66, Pollak 2005: 7). Before further developing this exploration of the social model of dyslexia it is important to recognise

that both the social model of dyslexia and disability are simply models, a theoretical framework and not an explanatory social theory of disability (Oliver 1990).

The Social Model of Disability is not a social theory: “it does not explain why disability exists only how we might see it” (Canton 2012). Cooper (2009) strongly argues for a social model or description of dyslexia:

“We challenge the deficit model of dyslexia in favour of a social model that maintains that we are not ‘disabled’ by our dyslexia, but by the expectations of the world we live in. There is nothing wrong with being dyslexic per se. We would argue that dyslexia is an experience that arises out of a natural human diversity on the one hand and a world on the other where early learning of literacy, and good personal organisation and working memory is mistakenly used as a marker of ‘intelligence’. The problem here is seeing difference as ‘deficit’”. (Cooper 2006)

What Cooper (2009: 64), Macdonald (2009), Pollak (2005) and Riddick (2001) share is a view that the disability of dyslexia is socially constructed and maintained. Importantly it is the social context which determines whether or not dyslexic people are disabled. Dyslexia is a disability in terms of the social model due to the barriers which society imposes on those of us who are dyslexic.

Cooper (ibid) describes dyslexia in terms of ‘neurodiversity’ (see Figure 1) and proposes a Bagatelle model which explains dyslexia in the wider context of differences. He asserts that dyslexia is just one of a range of labels that can be applied to differences in processing and other strengths or weaknesses across a population:



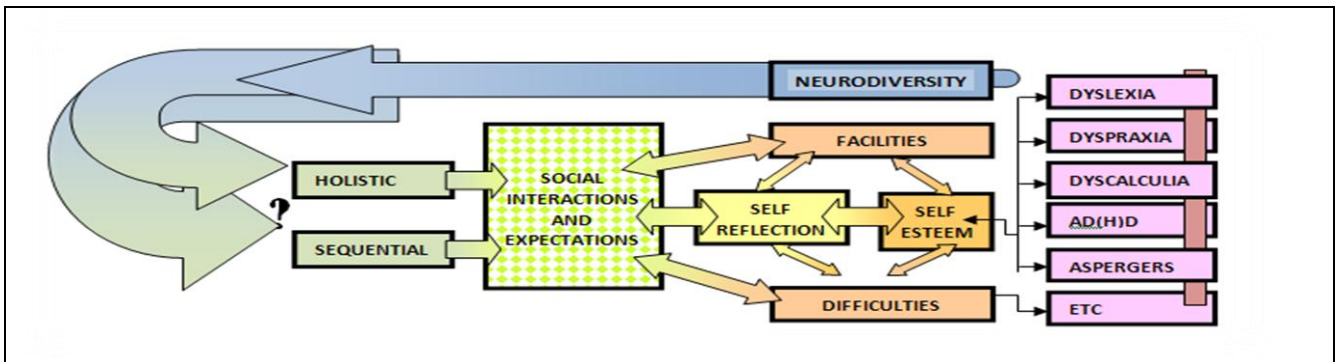


Figure 1: Bagatelle Model of Neurodiversity (Cooper 2010).

Pollak (2009: 4) offers a thoughtful and critical insight into the birth and development of the term neurodiversity. Grant (2009: 35) builds on the historical context offered by Pollak and offers an excellent definition of neurodiversity in which he suggests that it includes: Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder (ADHD) and Asperger's (Grant's definition of neurodiversity is included as at Appendix One due to its length). Neurodiversity is therefore a term which includes the broad range of what are often described as learning differences which are a part of the natural variation in human brains, and are appropriately articulated as differences not deficits (Grant 2009: 34)

It follows that the differences will manifest themselves in social actions and interactions in terms of strengths and difficulties. The differences which are identified by McLoughlin et al (2002) and Fitzgibbon & O'Connor (2002) as symptoms of dyslexia, can more accurately be described as socially created or constructed activities, where the cognitive differences are exposed by structural, organisational, cultural and attitudinal expectations, norms and mores of a lexical biased society.

One aspect of dyslexia that requires further research is the contested issue of dyslexic strengths. Whilst the overwhelming majority of definitions or descriptions of dyslexic identify weakness, deficit or difficulty, a small number describe strengths and positive aspects of dyslexia (Rice & Brooks 2004). The evidence base for dyslexic strengths or cognitive

advantage remains extremely limited and is perhaps a fertile area for future research.

Strengths usually ascribed to adult dyslexia include: holistic thinking and visualisation, seeing the 'bigger' picture, being creative and intuitive (McLoughlin, Leather & Stringer 2002: 8; Morgan & Klein 2000: 9; Davis & Braun 2010).

Cooper (2009: 66) usefully describes the strengths usually associated with adult dyslexia both generally and also in a learning context (See Table 2).

Dyslexic Strengths	
Generic	Learning Environment
Visual Thinking	Unusual Perspective (Approach)
Entrepreneurial Skills	Make Unusual Connections
Vision	Producing New Ideas Easily
Creativity	Good at Dissecting Arguments
Lateral Thinking	Good at 'What If' Problematics
Hands-on	Good at Following a Passionate Interest

Table 2: Strengths of Dyslexia (Cooper 2009: 66)

In the context of this current study it is not difficult to see how the strengths suggested by Cooper (ibid) might prove useful and represent a positive asset for dyslexic police officers investigating crimes. A word of caution is necessary at this point; evidence for these strengths remains very limited and the profile of strengths and difficulties of each dyslexic adult is different and on this basis; generalisations, prejudgements and stereotypes must be avoided.

Adult dyslexia is clearly a complex range of strengths and differences which subtly differ from person to person (Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002: 3) and from situation to situation. One final aspect of adult dyslexia which many researchers, dyslexic adults and practitioners broadly agree upon is that the characteristic difficulties which many dyslexics experience are frequently exacerbated by stressors which include: unrealistic time pressures, expectations and demands which do not take into account the dyslexic differences (Bartlett

2009a: 163, Jameson 2009: 205, Morgan & Klein 2000: 63, Hill 2005, Sumner, 2012: 105, Cooper 2009: 71).

### **2.3 Stress and the Affective Characteristics of Dyslexia**

Anxiety and stress appear frequently in discourses on dyslexia (McLoughlin et al 2002; Reid & Kirk 2001) and dyslexic adults themselves describe stress as a significant factor in their everyday lives in Morgan & Klein (2000). It is interesting that stress and anxiety are so frequently associated with dyslexia especially in education and the workplace. Moody (2010b: 55) describes how some dyslexic employees have developed such a sensitivity regarding their difficulties in the workplace and are so worried that they may lose their jobs that they develop “physical symptoms”. Moody (ibid) suggests that these can include Insomnia, panic attacks, chronic anxiety and or depression. If we were to accept that these are by-products of or directly influenced by the primary characteristics of dyslexia proposed by McLoughlin et al (2002) then we might assume that stress, anxiety and frustration are natural and inherent within all dyslexic adults.

Fitzgibbon & O'Connor (2002: 36) are highly critical of those who perpetuate such a suggestion. They demand that individuals and organisations should seek to identify the underpinning causes of stress, anxiety and frustration in adults who live with dyslexia in both education and employment. If, as McLoughlin et al (2002: 5), suggest the secondary or affective characteristics are those that develop as “a result of and in response to the [primary or cognitive characteristics of dyslexia]” then the obvious and natural question is what are the specific factors or circumstances that make difficulty with reading, writing, spelling, organisation stressful, frustrating and cause anxiety for dyslexic adults? The answer to this question is that I share the view of Pollak (2005) and Cooper (2009) that the anxiety, stress and frustration often described by dyslexic adults both in education and employment is caused by physical, procedural and attitudinal barriers experienced by dyslexic adults.

Fitzgibbon & O'Connor (2002: 37) assert that stress and associated anxiety (and frustration) within dyslexic adults is predominantly socially created. That is to say those dyslexic adults are no more predisposed to experiencing stress than a non-dyslexic adult. It is the organisational, attitudinal and cultural practices that may become, to some degree, the causes of stress in dyslexic adults in the workplace. The suggestion that dyslexic adults experience stress in the workplace due to the working practices and attitudes of employers resonates with the Social Model of Disability (Oliver 1996).

An added element highly relevant when exploring anxiety is the suggestion by Alexander-Passe (2006: 259) that "Anxiety causes humans to avoid whatever frightens them, and dyslexia is no exception". Ryan (1994) suggests that teachers misinterpret this avoidance as laziness when it could be argued that avoidance is more related to anxiety and confusion than apathy. Although the research of both Ryan and Alexander-Passe involved dyslexic adolescents, I would argue from personal experience with dyslexic adults in a police training environment that these specific suggestions can be correctly applied to dyslexic adults more generally. McLoughlin et al (2002: 10) corroborate what I have found in my own work with dyslexic police officers, that dyslexic adults are frequently persistent, determined, hard-working and resilient.

Despite the lack of research which explores police employment and dyslexia internationally there is a growing wealth of research that explores occupational stress which includes police work (Paterson 2003). A useful example of relevant and informative research was conducted by Johnson et al (2005) who examined work related stress across occupations including police officers in England & Wales. Johnson et al (ibid) found that police officers were within the top six of 'high stress' occupations. The sample included a broad and significant range of professional employment types including caring and emergency

services. The research team does not reveal individual or personal attributes such as disability or dyslexia.

Research which explored both self-esteem and anxiety in dyslexic adults by Riddick, Sterling, Farmer and Morgan (1999) found that high levels of anxiety and low levels of self-esteem were more prevalent in dyslexic adult students. The study carried out by Carroll and Iles (2006) built on earlier work of Riddick et al, investigating students between 19 and 24 years of age in a Higher Education context and again found that higher anxiety levels and low self-esteem were more prevalent among, and negatively impacted, on the lives of dyslexic adults than in their non-dyslexic peer group. Battle (1992) suggests that self-esteem is not a single aspect or feature of self-identity or self-concept.

Battle proposes four specific sub types adopted by Riddick et al (1999). Firstly *social self-esteem*: this refers to individuals' perceptions of the quality of their relationships with colleagues and friends; secondly *academic self-esteem*, refers to individuals' perceptions of their ability to succeed academically (i.e. self-esteem from trainers and educators); third is *parental self-esteem*, which refers to individuals' perceptions of their status at home including their subjective perceptions of how their parents view them; and finally *general self-esteem*, which refers to individuals' overall perceptions of their worth (i.e. self-esteem from themselves). The results of this study are interesting. It is worthy of note that the sample was small and all were engaged in higher education and not employment. Riddick et al (ibid) confirm that they did not set out to explore or even identify the underpinning or causal factors involved in low self-esteem or anxiety in dyslexic adults. However, this research does appear to support the generally accepted view held by many practitioners that dyslexic (neurodiverse) adults do appear to present and describe low self-esteem and higher states of anxiety in comparison to non-dyslexic adults (McCrea 2009: 199).

High levels of anxiety and stress in disabled people employed in the Public Sector of the UK were found to lead to a higher incidence of sickness absence in a limited study explored by Hirst, Thornton, Dearey and Maynard-Campbell (2004). There appears to be a void in the literature that specifically examines the potential links or correlations between dyslexia, police work and sickness or sickness absence as a form of avoidance. I return to the important subject of police work and stress later in this chapter.

## 2.4 Identifying Dyslexia

In the context of this study the word *identified* is used rather than ‘diagnosed’ with regards to dyslexia. I am aware that both Pollak (2009) and Cooper (2009: 67) are explicit in their assertions that the word ‘diagnosis’ predates the medical model of disability and specifically dyslexia; nevertheless I am cognisant of a potentially broader audience who might not be aware of this fact. Dyslexia is currently identified in the United Kingdom by way of a formal assessment (McLoughlin, Fitzgibbon & Young: 1994, Fitzgibbon & O’Connor 2002).

Assessments are either conducted by a psychologist or a suitably qualified person although Fitzgibbon & O’Connor (2002: 4) argue that assessments should only be conducted by ‘chartered’ psychologists’. They base this assertion on the belief that only a psychologist has the experience and qualification to make what they describe as ‘clinical judgements’. It is interesting to note that the language used is once again rooted in the medicalization of dyslexia. Dyslexia is identified through a bank of tests which are designed to recognise “the disparity between general intellectual functioning and functioning in certain specific areas” (McLoughlin, Fitzgibbon & Young 1994: 30). I do not intend to say much more about the specific process of assessment as this is not the focus of this study. The processes surrounding the assessment are discussed because the research participants will be questioned about their experiences and perceptions of the assessment process. This is also relevant in terms of the dyslexic identity and the language that the participants might use when describing dyslexia.

The product of the assessment is a detailed report in which the psychologist documents the results of the tests and associated activities together with a statement confirming whether dyslexia has been identified or not. The assessment report should include recommendations for learning and or workplace adjustments (McLoughlin et al 2002: 69). They also recommend that the content of the report be explained fully to the person who has been assessed (ibid).

“Written reports are only as good as the information they generate, and reports are useful only to the extent that they convey information clearly to the client, as well as to tutors and employers.....the author should consider whether it will help the dyslexic understand and address individual difficulties, and whether it will help tutors and employers support the dyslexic person. Essentially...it should reiterate what the client was told at the end of the assessment session” (McLoughlin et al 2002: 69).

McLoughlin et al suggest that the person being assessed should be informed of the outcome of the assessment and be provided with a copy of the assessment report. The report should include information and recommendations that can be interpreted and applied by tutors **and** employers alike. As Pollak (2005: 60) makes clear, the assessment process is a *crucial* aspect of the dyslexic adults' life and identity. The assessment process should ultimately provide the dyslexic adult with information that might assist them in validating their own life events and very specifically their experiences in the educational environment.

Formal assessments are relatively expensive and usually cost between three and five hundreds of pounds in the United Kingdom (Sharpe 2013). Where an employer suspects that an employee may be dyslexic then the employer should commission a dyslexia assessment (Mackenzie 2012: 183). In order to reduce costs some universities and organisations operate a system of dyslexia screening. Whereas formal assessments should only be conducted by chartered psychologists the screening can be conducted by any person; in practice only those with some expertise and specific training should conduct



such an activity due to the potential implications or consequences of the screening (Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002: 119). I do not intend to critically analyse or document the range and types of screening tools that are available as this is not directly relevant to this current study. What I will include are the processes that are employed in Higher Education and Police Training in the United Kingdom. Nichols (2012: 34) suggests that dyslexia screening can be operated at two levels: firstly at a 'population' level and secondly at an individual level. An example of the 'population' screening approach is operated by the De Montfort University (DMU) Disability Advice and Support Unit where whole populations of students are offered dyslexia screening at the beginning of their respective courses (Sharpe 2013). Although any individual student can request a screening at any time whilst at DMU some programmes offer whole population screenings at the start of the courses (ibid).

These programmes are all vocational courses and include: student police officers, student police community support officers, student probation officers, student youth and community workers, student nurses, student midwives and student social workers (Sharpe 2013). The selection of this population was not arbitrarily decided upon but determined by the high incidence of self and tutor referral to the DMU Disability Advice and Support unit for screening (ibid). Between 2008 and 2012 the DMU disability team conducted eight screening sessions of one hundred and seventy two student police officers. Seventy of the officers screened were referred for formal assessments; of these students sixty seven were identified as dyslexic (Sharpe 2013). The raw figures indicate that approximately thirty-nine percent of student police officers were identified as dyslexic. The police courses that are subject to the population screening are students who have been selected and employed by the police service and who attend a university to complete their initial training (Hill 2013).

The second approach to screening suggested by Nichols (2012: 34) is to provide screening for those who self-refer or those referred by tutors or managers. An example of this

approach is described by McLoughlin and Leather (2009: 292) where they describe the training of police trainers to screen police student officers who either self-refer or are referred by their police tutors who had received specialist adult dyslexia awareness training. This is the traditional approach to dyslexia screening that is widely operated by colleges and universities across the United Kingdom (Reid 2009). A particularly interesting issue emerges at the end of McLoughlin and Leather's discussion (2009: 293) where they describe that "a greater number than expected have been assessed" referring to the number of police recruits in training with the Metropolitan Police at Hendon in London. Unlike the student police officers who study for a Foundation Degree in Arts (Policing) qualification at De Montfort University the student police officers of the Metropolitan Police complete the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme independently of any Higher or Further Education institution (Metropolitan Police 2013).

## **2.5 Dyslexia beyond Assessment**

The relevance of identifying the differing approaches to initial police training in England and Wales, together with the identification of dyslexia in a policing context, will be made clear in this section of the review. Two processes will be considered; the first is the route taken by police officers who study for a degree level qualification as a core aspect of their initial training, and secondly those whose initial police training and or identification of dyslexia take place outside of Higher Education.

Those police students who complete their initial training at or in partnership with a Higher Educational Establishment (HEI) and who study at Foundation Degree level or above are often screened and/or assessed at the HEI alongside traditional students. The student police officers identified as dyslexic automatically become eligible for Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) (Sharpe 2013). The typical process at an HEI is set out in Table 3 below.

Typical HEI Process
<b>Screening</b>
<b>Assessment</b> (Completed and Outcome Explained)
<b>Report</b> (Typed copy provided)
<b>DSA</b> (Application made)
<b>Needs Assessment</b>
<b>Resources and Training Provided</b>

Table 3: Typical HEI Process

University students, including student police officers, who have been assessed as dyslexic are entitled to apply for Disabled Students Allowance via a funding body (DSA-QAG 2013). The aim of the scheme is to provide extra financial support whilst studying. The scheme enables dyslexic students to be provided with equipment to support their individual learning needs, for example laptop computers together with dyslexia-friendly mind-mapping software. All equipment is provided free of charge to the student and repayment is not required (see Pavey, Meehan & Waugh 2010).

As I have described previously in this chapter, the medical model of disability underpins this national process through its focus on making adjustments for the individual learner rather than the learning environment, as would be the case if the process was driven by social model thinking (Pollak 2009: 59). The DSA application process can be long and protracted (DSA-QAG 2013). Once the DSA application has been agreed then an assessment of needs is conducted. Pollak (2009: 60) reminds those involved in supporting dyslexic students that:

“This is a collaborative process involving discussion of the study strategies the student is currently using. The nature of the students’ course is a key element in determining his or her particular needs and how these might be best met. A summary of the results of these tests is then written up in a report” (Pollak 2009: 60)

Students are usually provided with resources, training in learning techniques and use of equipment for their academic studies. For those student police officers whose training and

education is not delivered in collaboration with Higher or Further Education establishments, the principal means of accessing funding for support comes from Job Centre Plus (DWP 2012). The 'Access-to-Work' scheme is a Government-funded scheme which is operated and managed by local Job Centres across England and Wales (ibid).

The Disability Employment Advisor (DEA) at the Job Centre is the conduit through which to access the scheme (DWP 2012). The DEA does not usually have specialist knowledge of dyslexia but rather an overview and awareness of a broad range of disabilities and impairments. In some instances the DEA may arrange and fund a dyslexia assessment via a chartered occupational psychologist, which was my own experience; larger organisations might reasonably be expected to fund diagnostic assessments (ibid; BDA 2013). The typical Access-to-Work process is presented in Table 4 below.

<b>Typical Access-to-Work Process</b>
<b>Meeting with DEA</b> (to Review Eligibility)
<b>Dyslexia Assessment</b> (Completed and Outcome Explained)
<b>Report</b> (Reviewed and explained)
<b>Workplace Assessment Conducted</b>
<b>Report Completed and Funding Agreed</b>
<b>Workplace Adjustments Reviewed</b>

Table 4: Typical Access to Work Process

As with the DSA scheme, Access-to-Work is underpinned by Medical Model principles which seek to make changes in, and to, the workplace at the individual level as opposed to addressing the attitudinal, organisational and physical barriers which disable people experience (Barnes & Mercer 2003).

The key aspect of Access-to-Work scheme is the Workplace Assessment of Needs. Moody (2010c: 27) helpfully sets out the aim of this type of assessment by recommending that the assessor ask the dyslexic adult in depth:

“about the nature and demands of the job, the strengths they bring to it, the difficulties they have with it, the coping strategies they use and the support given (or not) by their employer. Any emotional issues will also be fully discussed”

(Moody 2010c: 27)

It is only after this phase of the assessment that the employer is contacted to discuss what adjustments could be made. The dyslexic adult needs to be involved at all stages of this process (ibid). It is interesting to note that Moody (ibid) clearly sets out the requirement for the exploration and consideration of the emotional or affective components of the dyslexic employees experience and perceptions. Fitzgibbon and O'Connor (2002: 40) argue that the workplace assessment of needs should be conducted by or under the supervision of a chartered occupational psychologist. In practice many workplace needs assessments are conducted by a disability employment advisor from Job Centre Plus (Mackenzie 2012: 177). The assessment of needs process should include a meeting with the dyslexic adult employee, a thorough review of the dyslexia assessment report, an exploration of the practical and emotional aspects and effects of the role, a discussion with the Human Resources representative and a supervisor or operational manager who understands all aspects of the role of the dyslexic employee (ibid).

Funding for any equipment and or training agreed during the assessment of needs is provided in one of two ways; if the employee is new and the application for Access to Work is made within six weeks of starting employment then one hundred percent of the funding is provided by the Government (DWP 2013). This is also the case where a dyslexic employee changes employment. The second route for funding is where the employee applies to the scheme after six weeks of commencing employment. In this instance the employer will be required to provide twenty percent of the funding for the agreed adjustments with the Government providing the remaining eighty percent (DWP 2013).

The requirement for changes to be made for dyslexic adults in the workplace and in Higher Education is rooted in the anti-discrimination legislation of the United Kingdom. The language used in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995), the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Amendment) Regulations 2003, the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA 2005) and most recently the Equality Act 2010 (EA 2010) to describe the changes that should be made in the learning environment and the workplace for dyslexic person is 'Reasonable Adjustment'. In the context of this current study dyslexic police officers have only been included within the scope of disability related anti-discrimination legislation in the United Kingdom since the enactment of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Amendment) Regulations 2003 which came into effect in October 2004 (Hill 2008; 2010, McLoughlin & Leather 2009: 292).

Reasonable Adjustments for police officers were not required by law until October 2004. The scope and requirements of the disability discrimination legislation did apply to non-warranted police staff members (civilian employees) from 1995. A failure to seriously consider, and in most cases, make reasonable adjustment for a disabled person is very likely to amount to disability-related discrimination in which case the employee can seek redress through an Employment Tribunal (EA 2010). Fitzgibbon and O'Connor (2002: 51) offer a concise explanation of the challenges associated with defining and applying reasonable adjustments for the dyslexic adult in the workplace:

"All employers.....are under a legal obligation to identify and introduce appropriate changes, known as reasonable adjustments, to their work environment in order to create a level playing field for any disabled people they employ and any others who apply for vacant posts. The work environment includes human-resource functions such as recruitment, selection, appraisal, promotion, training and development"

(Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002: 51)

It is usually the employer who decides what is *reasonable* and what is not. It is not uncommon for employers to be slow in their provision of the adjustments or to avoid making them at all (Mackenzie 2012: 177). When considering what is reasonable and what is not for dyslexic employees Hagan (2009: 41) suggests that the following aspects should be considered: the size of the organisation, the nature of the job, the individual's needs and whether the adjustments: are practical, are excessively expensive, will significantly reduce the disadvantage faced by the dyslexic employee and finally could cause serious disruption to other colleagues. The risks associated with the approach suggested by Hagan are highlighted by Fitzgibbon and O'Connor (2002: 51) when they argue that:

“The whole problem of defining what ‘reasonable’ is, is an area where dyslexics are more disadvantaged than any other group. While identifying adjustments will be more difficult in the context of hidden disabilities generally, compared with visible disabilities, there are two important complicating factors that operate in the context of dyslexia that make the identification particularly difficult. First the wide range of possible workplace manifestations of dyslexia.....and secondly; expert opinion on adult dyslexia is dominated by what applies to educational establishments.....despite workplaces being very different.....and adjustments recommended will very probably almost exclusively focus upon literacy”.

(Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002: 52)

Fitzgibbon and O'Connor (ibid) are suggesting that even if reasonable adjustments are considered by an employer then these may not be appropriate to the workplace or the dyslexic persons' role. This may happen if the assessment of needs is not conducted by a professional person who has an understanding of both the broad nature of dyslexic characteristics and secondly if the professional person does not have a thorough understanding of the role of the employee. So even if an employer agrees to provide the changes or adjustments recommended in the workplace assessment of needs these may

not be appropriate or helpful to the dyslexic employee. The implications, if this occurs, is clearly significant on a number of levels.

Firstly, at the personal level, inappropriate workplace changes which are ineffective or inappropriate, might cause the dyslexic adult to experience greater difficulty in completing work based activities. This could include taking longer to complete tasks whilst attempting to become competent in the use of new equipment or processes. This can lead to anxiety, stress and frustration which can lead to avoidance and absence. Clearly this can impact upon the self-esteem and confidence of the dyslexic adult and which might resonate with previous difficulties to learn perhaps in an educational setting (Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002; Morgan & Klein 2000; McLoughlin et al 2002).

Secondly, at the organisational level, the potential implications are that the employer will believe that the dyslexic employee is not performing or is underperforming in spite of the provision of workplace adjustments. It is possible that the employer will argue that they have 'complied' with the requirement to make Reasonable Adjustments in accordance with the DDA 1995 or EA 2010. It is not impossible to imagine that an employer will instigate disciplinary, or in a policing context, incapability, proceedings against the employee. This might lead to the employee being forced to resign or having their employment terminated due to an organisational or structural failure which could perpetuate the discrimination and ultimately contribute to the oppression of dyslexic adults in employment (Foster 2007; Fevre, Robinson, Lewis & Jones 2013 – also see *Brooking v Chief Constable Essex Police* 2008). The concepts of discrimination and oppression of dyslexic and other disabled people are explored more fully later in this chapter.

Much of the literature makes it clear that an assessment of needs should be conducted both in terms of educational courses and separately in the workplace (McLoughlin et al 2002; Moody 2009; Leather & Kirwan 2012). The workplace assessment specifically must



be conducted by someone with a thorough understanding of adult dyslexia in employment and secondly have an understanding of the role and work practices required of the dyslexic adult (Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002). Due to the potential risks it is crucial that the dyslexic employee is involved in all aspects of the workplace assessment (Mackenzie 2012: 183). It may be that the workplace assessor will need to seek advice and guidance from some person who has a thorough understanding and appreciation of the work of the dyslexic employee. This may be the case for a number of Disability Employment Advisors from Job Centre Plus who have a general awareness as opposed to specialist knowledge of all disabilities within the meaning and scope of the Equality Act 2010 (ibid).

For the dyslexic police officers in this study to become eligible for Disabled Student Allowance or Access-to-Work funding they were required to produce evidence of eligibility. The dyslexic officer had provide an assessment report and in so doing, must tell people either at the university or in the police service that they are dyslexic.

## **2.6 Disclosure – From Private to Public.**

In the context of this study the term disclosure is used to describe the process of a dyslexic adult making another person or organisation aware that they are dyslexic. Gerber, and Price (2012: 138) correctly describe disclosure as both multi-faceted and a complicated process. As with sexual orientation, once disclosure of dyslexia has taken place it cannot be rescinded; disclosure is permanent. In the United Kingdom there is no legal requirement to disclose any disability including dyslexia. If disclosure is not made then the dyslexic adult will be unlikely to be able to access the systems of support including Access-to-Work funding (Hagan 2010: 34). On this basis a dyslexic adult might only access support services if they disclose. This approach to support of dyslexic adults in education and in employment is very deeply rooted in the medical model of disability with its strong focus on the individual rather than considering the wider social aspects of dyslexia (Oliver 1990). Self-disclosure of

a hidden disability or the processes of 'coming out' at the psychological level are linked to principles of the self - self-concept, self-esteem and self-confidence (Morgan & Klein 2000: 118, Gerber & Price 2012: 138). Disclosure of disabilities, and specifically dyslexia, within any police service has not yet been the subject of any formal study or research.

Internationally there is a small but growing body of research that is beginning to examine the experiences of disabled/dyslexic adults in employment (and training), including the disclosure of disability. Most notable and relevant to this current study are: Morris & Turnbull (2007) who explored disclosure of dyslexia amongst nurses in clinical practice in the UK; Foster (2008) who examined the learning experiences of dyslexic student radiographers; and Stanley et al (2007) in their examination of disclosing disability (including dyslexia) amongst students and practitioner social workers, nurses and teachers.

Despite the clear and obvious differences between occupational roles and the work of police officers, there are some areas of commonality between nursing, social work, teaching and policing that appear relevant here. All are person-centred occupations, that it is say that they all involve; direct face-to-face engagement with others; they all require a period of professional training and education prior to practice; and all are included within the scope of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2010 which prohibits disability-related discrimination (EHRC 2013).

Hirst et al (2004: 6) found that many disabled staff in the public sector reportedly held the view that disclosure of a disability had a negative effect on colleagues' attitudes to staff with hidden disabilities or mental health conditions. Dyslexia is often described as a *hidden disability* (McLoughlin et al 2002: 252, Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002: 94 Negative attitudes are a barrier in terms of dyslexia, just as stairs act as a physical barrier to many wheelchair users. Removing negative attitudinal barriers is equally as important as the removal of the

physical barriers in the context of the Social Model of Disability (Hill 2006). It is worthy of note that the study by Hirst et al (ibid) was published in 2004, two years before the enactment of the DDA 2005, which required public bodies to *promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons* (DDA 2005). Dyslexic adults' perception or expectation of negative attitudes from colleagues is also reported as an inhibitor or barrier to disclosure, as also identified by Stanley et al (2007: 56). In their study of Teachers, Nurses and Social Workers for the Disability Rights Commission, Stanley et al (ibid) describe disclosure of hidden disabilities including dyslexia as an *irrevocable step* that is sometimes partial or gradual in practice.

Disclosure in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and in the workplace was frequently described as rarely a single act but more a series of decisions and negotiations. Interestingly in the context of the current study Stanley (ibid) reports that of a sample of sixty professionals only three had chosen not to disclose their impairment in the workplace. The reported experiences of disclosure were divided into three categories: Positive, Negative or Mixed. Positive experiences are described as those which elicited support both physically and emotionally from peers, managers and the wider institution; Negative experiences are described as experiencing negativity in attitude and behaviours from peers and managers. It is frequently the attitudes of individual peers and managers as opposed to organisational processes that determined the quality of the experience of disclosure (Stanley et al 2007: 57). One approach to the decision-making process is described by Morris and Turnbull (2007: 38) in terms of a cognitive cost/benefit decision-making model.

Morris and Turnbull (ibid) in their study of disclosure by dyslexic student nurses in the United Kingdom found that a balance was needed between personal benefit (what do I stand to gain from disclosure both physically and/or emotionally) against the emotional cost

or risk to others (Gerber & Price 2012: 142). This complex decision-making model provided a rationale for the disclosure or non-disclosure of dyslexia amongst nurses. The findings of Morris and Turnbull (2007) corroborate the findings of Stanley et al (2007) and to a lesser extent Wray, Fell, Stanley, Manthorpe and Coyne (2005) that disclosure is a phased, complex series of acts as opposed to a single event. Further; these studies suggest that disclosure appears to be easier where there is a positive and supportive organisational culture towards disability/dyslexia and where individuals, specifically line managers and supervisors within that organisation, are supportive and accepting of the dyslexic adult.

The decision to disclose created an internal tension or sense of risk due to fear of prejudice in the workplace from peers and managers (Stanley 2007: 59). Stanley et al (2007) found that some practitioners felt the need for adjustment was so great that disclosure was not a positive choice but rather an unavoidable necessity. Interestingly, Stanley et al (ibid) found that disclosure was reportedly easier for some practitioners who were experienced in the employment role and were able to demonstrate a history of competence or ability to 'do the job' which offered a sense of security. Stanley et al (2007: 51) found that when disclosing, 'the organisational culture was mediated by the attitude of their immediate line managers' and that the decision to disclose was 'influenced by having someone supportive in a position of authority'. These comments resonate with the underpinning principles of a social model approach to disability and also with the general duties of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the subsequent Equality Act 2010. Attitudes of individuals and organisations can have an empowering or disempowering affect upon individuals with hidden disabilities when deciding whether or not to disclose a disability in the workplace.

A number of potential drivers for disclosure are set out by Sumner (2009: 74) whose suggestions include that disclosure will:

- Enable Reasonable Adjustments to be made and support mechanisms to be put in place;
- Establish eligibility for Access to Work funding;
- Alleviate the employee's anxiety about keeping dyslexia as a guilty secret;
- Encourage the opening up of communication channels between the employee, managers and other members of staff;
- Raise awareness and encourage a clearer understanding of dyslexia and related issues.

At a fundamental level I recognise the aspirational aspects of Sumner's (ibid) suggestions, though the language used is inappropriate. Disclosure 'could' bring about some of these things if the context of disclosure was supportive, open and respectful. Suggesting that disclosure 'will' afford any of these things is questionable. The psycho-emotional aspects of disclosure are not considered sufficiently and the needs of the employer are put before the needs of the employee. It is clear that disclosure to an employer has the potential to benefit the dyslexic employee so long as the actions that follow the disclosure are positive and lead to reasonable adjustments and support in the workplace.

“Dyslexia is widely misunderstood, and the enormous potential dyslexics have is largely lost because of misunderstandings, prejudices and unreasonable fears. Employers need to resist the inclination to be swayed by the false beliefs that abound in relation to dyslexia. They need to accept that barriers that could easily be removed but that are usually not easy to identify often disable dyslexics” (Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002: 72)

The fear of stigma and negative labelling, or more precisely mislabelling, are frequently cited as important factors in studies and writing that explore the experiences of disclosure of hidden disabilities including dyslexia (Blankfield 2001, McLoughlin et al 2002, Reid & Kirk 2001, Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002, Morris & Turnbull 2007, Stanley et al 2007, Wray et al

2005). The negativity often associated with stigma operates at two distinct levels: firstly the assertion that dyslexia equals abnormal and secondly the medical language used to describe dyslexia (Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002: 140). In their opening observation on labelling and identity on coming-out, Swain & Cameron (1999: 68) explore the unique nature of identity with regard to hidden disabilities and how this labelling process is different from visible or self-evident disabilities. Interestingly, and relevant to this current study, Swain & Cameron (ibid) draw similarities between the process of 'coming-out' as disabled and the self-disclosure of sexual orientation.

The concept of stigma is associated with the work of Erving Goffman (1963) who suggests that with a hidden or 'not evident' disability like dyslexia, there are issues both of how individuals identify themselves and how far they choose to disclose any difficulties that they have (Riddick 2003: 391). A label is not always perceived in negative terms (Becker 1963). Riddick (2000: 665) offers a highly relevant comment when suggesting that:

“It may be that in the case of hidden or not evident impairments that labelling serves the function of explaining why specific aspects of a person's behaviour should not be judged negatively by the prevailing cultural standards. Paradoxically, in this case labelling can be seen as having a positive role in pointing up differences which are not visible. Whereas for evidently disabled people the problem is that they are often visually perceived as different. In this instance labels can be seen as having a negative role in underlining the differences, rather than the overriding similarities that they have to the wider culture” (Riddick 2000: 665)

The label of dyslexia therefore may offer some an opportunity to rationalise, comprehend or contextualise their life experiences, including failures or low self-esteem. (Reid & Kirk 2001: 7) It can be used to explain and understand episodes or experiences within social, education and employment situations. Luecking (1997: 229) warns that the label could also stigmatise those seeking employment, through a misunderstanding of dyslexia and the

abilities and perceived stereotypical weaknesses of the potential employee. As Luecking (ibid) confirms, there has been little research into employer perceptions of dyslexia including the police service; but the reported studies of Teachers, Nurses and Social Workers in the UK all identify the fear of stigma attached to the dyslexia label as a key driver or inhibitor when deciding to disclose dyslexia (Stanley et al 2007, Morris & Turnbull 2007).

The fear of stigma, becoming the subject of bullying and discrimination in the workplace, as described by the participants in the studies by Stanley et al (2007) and Morris and Turnbull (2007) have been realised and experienced by many disabled and dyslexic people in the workplace. Fitzgibbon and O'Connor (2002: 72).have largely accounted for these experiences, as previously noted. Evidence of such behaviour is found in personal testimony (Hill 2005), research findings (Stanley et al 2007) and more recently in the findings of Employment Tribunals and Employment Appeals Tribunals brought by dyslexic employees in England and Wales (Brooking v Chief Constable of Essex Police 2008). This later example is further examined in the wider context of policing in the following section.

There is no real or obvious requirement to disclose that one is a wheelchair user, a man, woman, or black in society as these are almost always obvious. Further as with sexual orientation when society usually assumes heterosexuality as the 'norm' so non-disabled is 'presumed unless otherwise stated' (Swain & Cameron 1999: 68). Self-disclosure or coming out is considered a *declaration of identity outside of the norm*.

“For a person who is oppressed, one of the key tasks of identity formation then involves ‘coming out’ as different and integrating a sense of that difference into a healthy self-concept, which may itself, be stigmatised by the majority society”

(Corker 1996: 47)

For Corker (ibid), coming out is an acknowledgement of difference and that this statement is a challenge to the process of accepting, or at the very least acquiescing to, the dominant

disablist pressures of society to 'pass as normal'. The pressures on an individual to 'come-out' are multiple and complex yet these pressures are exacerbated by the requirement in education and employment of the ascription of the disability label before most adjustments are made or before protection against disability-related discrimination is assured. The potential benefits of the disability label are therefore obvious for those who rely upon state provision for resources and support related to Reasonable Adjustment (Reid & Kirk 2001: 7, Riddick 2003, Solvang 2007: 80).

## **2.7 Dyslexia, Disability and the Police**

Prior to the inclusion of police officers within the scope of disability-focused anti-discriminatory legislation in 2004, applicants with disabilities were barred from joining the police service in England and Wales (DRC 2003). Prior to the inclusion of police officers within this legislation, police officers who were injured or developed a disability whilst serving were able to apply for early retirement with an enhanced and early payment of the police pension (Police Federation 2007). The extension of the DDA(A)R 2003 brought an immediate end to this practice. With effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004 the police services of England and Wales were required to consider an application from any disabled person (DRC 2004). The transition was not a smooth and painless process as was evident in the BBC Radio 4 interview of Kirsten Hearn a member of the Metropolitan Police Authority and Linda Van Den Hende, Director of the metropolitan police strategic disability team and leader on disability employment for the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) in 2004:

"We've heard a lot of stories from disabled staff about what's happening to them and I think that it seems to us that there is quite a bullying culture. There is a very macho culture in the Metropolitan Police Service and if you are a serving police officer you're expected to be fully fit, if for some reason you're injured or become disabled in any other way .....because the [police] culture is about the fitness – fitness itself –it's a bit of an issue for disabled staff". (BBC 2004).



What the interviewees suggest is that police culture is a key factor in the acceptance or otherwise of disability within the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and there is no reason to suspect that this is not the case across the police services of England and Wales. In the same interview Van Den Hendel was pressed on the issue of fairness at work and refused to acknowledge that there was a 'problem of disability-related discrimination' in terms of police and processes within the MPS (BBC 2004).

The Employment Appeals Tribunal's decision in *Paterson v Commissioner of the Metropolis* in 2007 (EAT 2007), that MPS was guilty of disability related discrimination, suggests that Hearn's acknowledgement of a culture of bullying in MPS was an honest appraisal of the situation and notwithstanding the comments of Van Den Hendel, disability discrimination exists with the police service. Paterson who was a police Chief Inspector with over twenty years' service was assessed as dyslexic and requested additional time in an internal police promotion examination. The officer had an excellent reputation and demonstrated a high degree of competence in his role (EAT 2007). His request for Reasonable Adjustment was rejected by the Metropolitan Police Service in 2007 on the grounds that he was not sufficiently impaired. The Employment Appeals Tribunal found in his favour and the Metropolitan Police were found to have discriminated against the officer on the grounds of disability (EAT 2007). The significance of this finding extends far beyond the police service. The decision of the case significantly extended the scope of day-to-day activity which remains a significant aspect of the definition of a disability within the scope of the DDA 2005 and Equality 2010.

It is interesting to note that this case was brought by Paterson a year after Leather and Kirwan (2012) began to provide specialist dyslexia training and support to the Metropolitan

Police Service. Paterson was not the only dyslexic police officer to seek redress. Police Constable Owen Brooking of Essex Police was forced to resign from the police service in 2008 (Brooking v Chief Constable of Essex Police 2008). Brooking had disclosed that he was dyslexic to his employer but was forced to resign because of his treatment by peers, supervisors and managers. Brooking claimed that Essex Police had discriminated against him on the grounds of his disability (dyslexia). The employment tribunal found Essex Police guilty of disability-related discrimination. Interestingly in the summing up of the tribunal the chair commented upon the poor level of support offered to PC Brooking by the Police Federation representative. The chair was also highly critical of PC Bookings' peers and supervisors for their lack of understanding and for their discriminatory behaviour towards him during the period that he served as a police officer. The tribunal heard that he was taunted and humiliated and branded as 'thick, lazy and lacking grit' (Brooking v Essex Police 2008). It appears that PC Brooking was labelled as difficult, different and not normal and thus he was forced to resign. These events took place despite his disclosure of dyslexia and the inclusion of police officers within the scope of the DDA 2005.

The cases described above are not isolated events. Other examples of where dyslexic police officers have brought successful claims of dyslexia (disability) related discrimination against their employer include: Johnston v Chief Constable of Humberside Police (2009) and Haynes v Chief Constable of Gloucestershire Police (2009); Whitehouse v Chief Constable of Devon & Cornwall Police (2008). In other cases police employers have settled claims for disability-related discrimination in the hours before entering Employment Tribunals (Hill 2010a). What is interesting about these cases is that the employers were all found guilty of discriminating against dyslexic police officers of all ranks and across England and Wales. In all of the cases reported there is compelling evidence of systematic bullying by multiple agents within the police service. It is clear that this type of discriminatory

behaviour are not isolated to the actions of a few 'bad apples' or rogue individuals within the police service (Thompson 2011: 194).

It is worth returning to the literature with regards to police culture at this juncture to shed light upon the discriminatory behaviours. There is an ever-growing body of literature devoted to exploring and explaining police (canteen) occupational culture (see for example: Adlam & Villiers 2002, Coleman & Gorman 1982, Holdaway 2003, McLaughlin, 2007, Reiner 2000, Rowe 2004, Sanders & Young 2000, Waddington 1999, Loftus 2009, Rumens & Broomfield 2012). The majority of these studies are associated with racism or institutional racism, sexism and homophobia. There is currently nothing comparable exploring the possibility of disablism within the police service. This apparent void in the literature might be explained through the relatively recent inclusion of police officers within the DDA, and the inevitable period of reorientation for the wider service. Additionally it might be explained in the context of the historical position where the ascription of the disability label ensured a fast track exit from the police service with an enhanced generous police pension (Police Federation 2007).

Waddington (1999) offers a view which suggests that police culture is nothing more than a *mirror image* of the values and attitudes of wider society (Waddington 1999: 302). Police culture is perceived, anecdotally at least, as a 'macho' sub-culture which has historically led to accusations of racism, sexism and homophobia within the rank and file of the police service (Brown & Campbell 1991). Staff support associations such as the Black Police Association (BPA) the Gay Police Association (GPA) and the NDPA are formed; it is suggested by Rowe (2007: 20) and Holdaway (1996) that this has been in response to perceived exclusion from the national police staff association, the Police Federation. It is argued that the larger organisation does not understand or represent the diverse needs of

marginalised groups (Rowe 2007: 20). Furthermore, these organisations have been formed in response to perceived injustice and discrimination within the police service (Holdaway 1996). The depth of literature suggests that the police service does not have a history of providing a supportive environment for marginalised groups both inside and outside of the organisation.

Holdaway (2003) reminds those who seek to change attitudes within the police service that:

“Officers do not police ethnic minorities in a wholly distinct manner. The occupational [police] culture of the lower ranks is central here and officers’ ‘common-sense’ views about policing are all important. Any reforms will be filtered through this common-sense, refracted as new ideas harmonize with or jar against taken-for-granted assumptions. Processes of racialization are mediated through the occupational culture of the rank and file, which informs all policing and binds the policing of ethnic minorities to routine policing”. (Holdaway 2003: 71)

Although Holdaway was referring to ethnic minorities in this paper I believe that the concept or ethos of his observations can be equally applied in terms of police disablist practices and disablism. The ‘common sense’ or ‘business as usual’ model of police culture proposed by Holdaway (ibid), where those who are *different* are *a problem* may partly explain the discriminatory processes and behaviours that led to the employment tribunals described previously. The growing number of police disability support groups across England & Wales should have sounded the call to action. It appears, from the cases described previously, that some within the police service seek to maintain the status quo and continue with ‘business as usual’ practices, which exclude those who are stigmatised or labelled as different (Holdaway 2003).

## 2.8 Discrimination and the Police

The narratives discussed suggest that police culture is a dominant and powerful force acting both internally in terms of police officers and police staff and externally in terms of police engagement and interactions with the public. Neil Thompson (2012) offers a means

through which the discriminatory behaviours described previously in this chapter might be better understood. Before describing the model it is necessary to define how Thompson defines discrimination:

“Discrimination involves not only identifying differences but also making a negative attribution – attaching a negative or detrimental label or connotation to the person, group or entity concerned.....in order to develop our understanding of discrimination and the oppression that arises from it, it is important to recognise that it operates at three separate but interrelated levels: Personal, Cultural and Structural. Each level is important in its own right, but so too are the interactions between them” (Thompson 2011: 23)

For Thompson (ibid) discrimination transcends thought and action. He acknowledges the dangers of labelling people or groups across all aspects of human and social diversity. This way of understanding discrimination is known as the Thompson PCS analysis (Thompson 2011: 25). Thompson suggests that:

“Disability acts as a social division, dividing one group of people off from the mainstream, thereby creating a minority. This group is then subjected to discrimination at three distinct but interrelated levels:

- P – Personal prejudice which manifests itself as rejection, marginalisation, ridicule and so on,
- C – Cultural expectations, norms, stereotypes, representations and linguistic forms that devalue and disempower disabled people,
- S – Structural relations of power, inequality, discrimination and disadvantage, reinforce and underpin oppressive factors at other levels.” (Thompson 2011: 115)

The lens of the PCS model of analysis can be used to view police culture and the discrimination experienced by dyslexic police officers as well as others described previously in this section. Thompson (ibid) suggests that the Personal level involves one’s own thoughts, feelings and actions. These attitudes and behaviours are linked to prejudgements

and stereotypes and once fixed can be very difficult to change even when confronted with compelling evidence which demonstrates the flawed or inappropriate natures of one's thinking or actions. Thompson (ibid) argues that this level of discrimination is most notable when the discriminator is in a powerful position and can equally be overt or covert in nature. At the Cultural level, discrimination can be seen in the language and humour employed (ibid). In terms of humour Thompson argues that the basis of much humour is the demonization of particular people, traits or groups. These are used as 'scapegoats' or are 'pilloried' and the effect can be that those so demonised are excluded and made to believe that they are not a part of that particular culture (ibid).

The power of language within a culture should not be underestimated, Thompson suggests that it "both reflects cultural norms, assumptions and patterns and contributes to their maintenance and their transmission from generation to generation" (Thompson 2011: 27). Berger and Luckman (1967: 36) assert that humour and language combine to create what they describe as a 'taken-for-grantedness' of everyday life and that its manifestation is that both is that both thought and action become 'unquestioned and routine', what they describe as the 'wallpaper' of everyday life' (ibid). Thompson supports this position when he argues that:

"A significant feature of cultures is the way in which members of a particular cultural group become so immersed in its patterns, assumptions and values that they do not even notice that they are there – they become part of the 'taken-for-grantedness' of everyday life" (Thompson 2011: 28)

Thompson's suggestion of 'taken for grantedness' can be seen in a number of inquiry reports most notably the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report of Sir William Macpherson in which he identified institutional racism as a caustic aspect of police culture (Macpherson 1999: 6:34).

The final level of the Thompson PCS analysis is discrimination at the structural level (Thompson 2011: 29). Thompson (ibid) suggests that “the structural level comprises the macro-level influences and constraints of the various social, political and economic aspects of the contemporary social order”. What is asserted here is that events and activities that occur at the personal and or cultural levels influence and are influenced by socio-political factors. These include “structural relations of power, inequality, discrimination and disadvantage reinforce and underpin oppressive factors at other levels”. Examples include: funding and the allocation of materials resources (Thompson 2011: 115).

The PCS analysis approach to understanding how discrimination operates is a useful means of understanding aspects of police cultures with specific regard to the discrimination experienced by people within and outside of the police service. What is becoming clear from the literature is that dyslexic police officers and other minority groups within the police service have experienced discrimination in the workplace (see Paterson v Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis 2008). Disability related discrimination in the context of policing has not been restricted to police officers and staff. In 2011 the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC2011) published their findings following an inquiry into disability related harassment.

The inquiry examined ten cases where disabled people had died or been seriously injured and in which the police and other agencies had been involved. The case that triggered the inquiry was the death of Fiona Pilkington and her daughter Francecca Hardwick (spelling is correct) following years of abuse, violence and harassment. Despite over thirty calls to the police no positive action was taken. The inquest jury found that Leicestershire Police and the local authority bore some responsibility for their deaths (EHRC 2011: 10). A common theme in all of the ten cases reviewed in the EHRC inquiry is that the police services from

across the United Kingdom failed to respond positively to the harassment of disabled people despite a legal and moral obligation to do so (ibid).

The failure to act appropriately amounts to discrimination on the grounds of disability. What is significant here is that the literature identifies that disability discrimination experienced within the police service, e.g. Brooking and the discrimination experienced by the public e.g. Pilkington & Hardwick, occurred not in one isolated area but across England and Wales. Although the literature to this point does not specifically describe this behaviour as such, the term that might appropriately be applied to such a broad range of discrimination is 'disablism'.

The term 'disablism' has its origins in the Social Model of Disability in which day to day activities of members of society, including those in education, employment and recreation, perhaps unconsciously, may perpetuate oppressive structures (attitudes and behaviours) upon those who live with disability including dyslexia (Madriaga 2007: 400) . The underpinning theme of disablism is that society creates and perpetuates disability (Oliver, 1990; Barnes, 1991). Disablism is understood as a process, similar to institutional racism (Macpherson 1999; Ahmad, 2004), in which individuals and institutions may either deliberately or 'unwittingly' discriminate against people who deviate from 'the norm'.

It is important to note at this point that whatever the level of discrimination, it is people, who are the mediators of discriminatory actions. Whilst Thompson provides an informative and useful tool in which to recognise and analyse discrimination, he does not provide a theoretical underpinning which might explain why discrimination exists. The work of Foucault offers one possible explanation as to why disability discrimination exists and is perpetuated in society and specifically within institutions including the police service.



Foucault (2003) argues that the oppression of the disabled can be traced back to the eighteenth century with the emergence of what he describes as 'bio-power' where agents of the state began to record and measure ratios of births to deaths and other human activities in the form of statistics (Foucault 2003). As Tremain notes:

“As these phenomena began to be taken into account, a new type of medicine developed, whose main function was public hygiene, and whose institutions centralised the power of the new medicine, normalised its knowledge, and co-ordinated the care that it distributed under its auspices. There were campaigns to educate the public and *medicalise* the population” (Tremain 2005: 5)

Considering this perspective, it can be argued that the medicalization of society lies at the heart of disability related discrimination and the oppression that many people experience. The collection and analysis of statistical data evolved to a state where mechanisms were introduced and included a function which included forecasting and statistical estimations. In turn this led to the development of regulatory mechanisms that existed solely to prescribe norms, maintain an average and compensate for variations in the population. (Foucault 2003: 238). This has been further refined over the past two hundred years to a point where:

“A vast apparatus, erected to secure the wellbeing of the general population, has caused the contemporary disabled subject to emerge into discourse and social existence. Amongst the items that have comprised this expansive apparatus are; asylums, income support programmes, quality of life assessments, workers compensation benefits, special education programmes, regimes of rehabilitations, parallel transit systems.....These (and other) practices, procedures, and policies have created, classified, codified, managed and controlled social anomalies through which some people have been divided from others and *objectivised* as (for instance) physically impaired, insane, handicapped, mentally ill, retarded, and deaf”

Further, Foucault went on to suggest that:

“In recent times, practices of division, classification, and ordering around a norm have become the primary means by which to individualise people, who come

to be understood scientifically, and who even come to understand themselves in this mode” (Foucault 2003: 144).

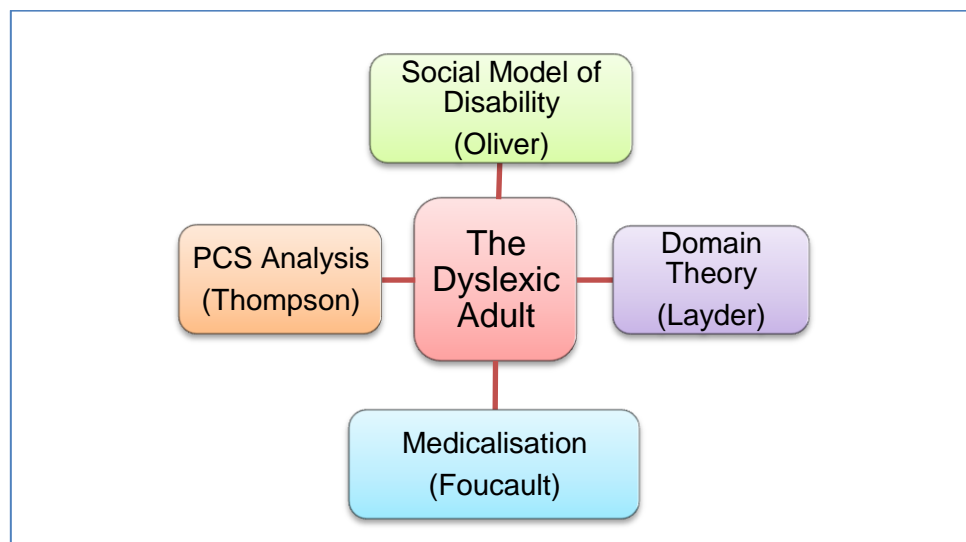
The medicalization of the individual, with the emphasis on normalcy and treating or curing those that deviate from the prescribed or expected norm, is highly significant in this study. This is because it will assist in the understanding of the interactions between those labelled as deviant (dyslexic police officers) and those who are considered to be normal (non-dyslexics). Foucault’s view suggests is that in the context of this study the dyslexic adult may view themselves as abnormal and subscribe unconsciously through conditioning and socialisation to understanding dyslexia and disability from an individual and medical model perspective.

To develop this further, it is possible that those who engage and interact with dyslexic adults might understand dyslexia and disability from this same perspective. It is not difficult to see the challenge faced by Cooper (2009) and those of us who believe that dyslexia is a natural variation of the human subject and not a medical condition in need of treatment or cure. Those who attempt to promulgate an alternative to the medical model of disability, and specifically dyslexia, will have to battle through with the effects of over two centuries of social conditioning through discourse and socialisation in order to be heard.

If we accept the explanation of Foucault that the medicalization of the population is at the heart of disability related discrimination, then it is possible to apply the Thompson PCS analysis model (2011: 7) to this approach to illuminate the discrimination at the three separate but interconnected levels. This is too far a leap to make at this point as there is an obvious and unacceptable void in this proposal; how can we understand the relationship between the citizen and the state, the dyslexic person and those in positions of power and the institutions? The relationship between the structure and agency is the gap that needs to

be addressed. Layder (2006: 272) proposes a theory that might illuminate the relationships and in so doing bridge Foucault and Thompson. In Domain Theory, Layder (ibid) argues that social reality, the relationship between the individual and Society, or between Agency and Structure, can only be understood in terms of multiple interrelated domains. The domains are: Psychobiography, Situated Activity, Social Settings and Contextual Resources.

What Layder proposes is that social reality and the experiences of individuals and groups of people must be considered through all of the four domains (Layder 2006: 272). Two additional components that must be included in any application of Domain Theory are Power Relations and Time & Space. Domain theory is more fully explained in the following chapters of this thesis. For this literature review chapter I believe that it is sufficient to suggest that Layder's' Theory of Domains is a useful tool which offers a potential connection between Foucault with that of Thompson and Oliver's Social Model of Disability as shown in Figure 2:



**Figure 2: Core Orientating Concepts**

The orientating concepts presented above have emerged from the literature and provide a foundation and scaffold upon which the overarching aim and sub-questions at the heart of this study are built. The orientating concepts are presented as a one-dimensional, flat

image at this early stage; the multiple layers and interconnections will be further developed as this current study develops. Hirst et al (2004: 10) reminds us that one of the many current gaps in knowledge is a comparison of disabled people's employment experiences across the public/private sectors, to provide the context within which to evaluate and interpret findings related to the public sector. It is expected that this current study will contribute to the gap in the knowledge proposed by Hirst et al (2004).

## **2.9 The Aim and Objectives of this Study**

The review of the literature has set out the historical and contemporary understanding of dyslexia. A range of definitions, descriptions and models have been reviewed (Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002; Rice & Brooks 2004). Equally the contentious and contested models of disability, both the Medical/Individual and the Social, have also been examined generally and then specifically in terms of dyslexia (Oliver 1990; McLoughlin et al 2002; Cooper 2009). This is significant because the self-concept and self-esteem of the dyslexic adult is rooted in their perception and frame of reference with regards to disability. A dyslexic adult's belief that dyslexia is a personal weakness or deficit for example may negatively impact upon their willingness to disclose or seek support.

Alternatively a dyslexic adult who understands dyslexia from a social model perspective may still experience bullying and discrimination though their self-concept, self-esteem and confidence may be less affected. This is important in the context of this current study for reasons which will be set out in question three below. The literature suggests that dyslexia is not a fixed or universal phenomenon but rather a combination of strengths and weaknesses. There are both cognitive and affective aspects to the dyslexic experience. The manifestations of adult dyslexia in both the educational environment and work settings can be adversely affected and exacerbated by external factors including: time pressures, tiredness and other environmental factors.

Much of the adult dyslexic identity is shaped by both positive and negative educational and workplace experiences (Morgan & Klein 2000). There is a growing body of research which has explored the dyslexic-identity of adults in employment. There does not appear to be any published research which has explored the dyslexic-identity and self-concept of dyslexic police officers. The overarching aim of this study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers from across England and Wales. The first question that this current study seeks to address is drawn directly from the literature and it seeks to identify how dyslexic police officers understand dyslexia and how dyslexia fits into the concept of disability in terms of models, theory and legislation. The first question is therefore:

**1. How do dyslexic police officers understand the nature of dyslexia and its relationship with the concept of disability?**

Unlike many other forms of impairment and disability, dyslexia is not usually visible. The literature suggests that the decision to disclose or not to disclose dyslexia is multi-faceted, complicated and difficult (Pollak 2005; Mackenzie 2012). Stigma and the fear of bullying or discrimination feature highly in the considerations of the dyslexic adults who have described their experiences in the small number of research studies examined in the literature review (Moody 2009; Stanley et al 2007). The literature provides substantial evidence of bullying and discrimination against those who are not white, male and heterosexual within the police service as well as those who are 'othered' or considered outsiders.

Disclosure in any educational environment or workplace has been described in much of the literature as both difficult and challenging. In the context of this current study the disclosure will take place within an institution in which substantial evidence has been reported in terms of racism, sexism and homophobia. There is a growing body of research exploring the disclosure experiences of dyslexic adults in the workplace yet none thus far have examined

the disclosure of dyslexic police officers. The second question that this current study seeks to address is:

**2. What factors motivate and or inhibit the disclosure of dyslexia by Police Officers?** (What are the experiences and consequences of disclosure?)

The literature suggests that disclosure is frequently linked to requests for support and assistance in the workplace (Gerber & Price 2012). This is significant because the employees must disclose that they are dyslexic in order to access changes in the workplace. The literature indicates that dyslexic adults frequently fear being stigmatised and discrimination if they disclose. The alternative to disclosure which is evident in the literature is that where disclosure does not take place or takes place at some later stage then the dyslexic adult is sometimes subjected to bullying and harassment for a failure to disclose earlier. This is in spite of a degree of protection afforded by disability-related anti-discrimination legislation from 1995. There is a small but growing body of evidence in the literature which suggests that dyslexic police officers are being denied access to the support systems and processes (Simpson 2009).

The literature identifies a small but growing number of dyslexic police officers taking their cases to Employment Tribunal and being successful. The negative aspects of Police 'canteen' Culture are often cited in the literature as the basis for such behaviours both within and outside of the police service (Waddington 1999; O'Neill & Holdaway 2007; Loftus 2009). The literature suggests that dyslexic adults in the workplace should be provided with a workplace assessment through the Access to Work scheme operated by the DWP and yet many assessments do not take place or are conducted by people with limited or no understanding of dyslexia outside of an educational environment. On this basis the third question that this study seeks to address relates to the access and provision of support both within the police service and through the Access-to-Work scheme and specifically what are the dyslexia-related challenges in the operational role and what support systems

and processes have they experienced. The specific third question that this study seeks to address is:

**3. How are processes and products of workplace support (including Reasonable Adjustments) available, accessed and/or experienced by dyslexic police officers?**

This study is believed to be the first systematic exploration of the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers in England & Wales. The focus of the research is the lived experiences of dyslexic police officers outside of the classroom and specifically in the operational role. The research questions have been developed to provide a place and space for the voices of dyslexic police officers from across England and Wales to be heard for the first time. These questions should allow for the thoughts, feelings and experiences of the dyslexic police officer to be considered against a backdrop of the literature and in the context of the theoretical underpinnings which are examined in Chapter Three of this study which follows.

**Summary of Section Two:**

There is no single, universally accepted definition of dyslexia despite over one-hundred years of study and research. The majority of the definitions of dyslexia are rooted in the language of the medical or individual model of dyslexia. The Social Model of Disability suggests that disability is located in society and it is imposed on people with impairments or who are different in some way. One approach to defining dyslexia which resonates with the author is the definition of neurodiversity proposed by Cooper (2009). He describes dyslexia as a natural variation of human kind where we all have a range of strengths and difficulties. Dyslexia is recognised as a disability within the scope of the anti-discrimination legislation of the United Kingdom.

Changes to the workplace and educational environments are available in terms of Reasonable Adjustments but these can only be accessed following disclosure. The making of the private – public is a complex and multi-phased activity which can sometimes lead to stigma and discrimination. The systems and process for support within the workplace can be accessed through external agencies; the adjustments are not always made and disability-related discrimination occurs. In the context of this current study the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers have not yet been the subject of academic inquiry and so this study represents a first step towards an understanding of what it is like to be a dyslexic police officer in England and Wales.



## Chapter Three: Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers. In this study I adopted a dual staged, qualitative method. The first stage involved the development, dissemination and analysis of self-completion questionnaires, which were designed to allow the participants to identify a range of issues that would inform the study. The second stage involved face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with dyslexic police officers; the transcripts of the interviews form the majority share of the data collected. Five participants withdrew from the study between phases. A significant and extended period of analysis followed the data collection. Adaptive Theory (Layder 2006) underpins the data analysis. In the concluding section of the previous chapter I set out the research questions that this study sought to answer. I deliberately restate the questions in the opening of this chapter as a reminder as to the purpose of this study. The overarching exploratory aim at the heart of this research is:

- To explore the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers in England and Wales.

The three specific questions that this study seeks to answer are:

- How do dyslexic police officers understand the nature of dyslexia and its relationship with the concept of disability?
- What motivates dyslexic police officers to disclose dyslexia; what are the experiences and consequences of disclosure?
- How are processes and products of workplace support (including Reasonable Adjustments) accessed by dyslexic police officers?

## **3.2 Research Orientation and Framework**

### **3.2.1 Epistemological and Ontological Positioning.**

The theoretical underpinnings of this study are both influenced and shaped by Layder's theory of social reality (2005: 146). Layder identifies four distinct but interconnected domains which were described in Section 2.8 previously. Linked to domain theory is Layder's 'adaptive' approach which encourages researchers to consider alternative standpoints throughout the research process to inspire 'inter-paradigm communication' or the amalgamation of what Layder describes as 'extant theory' with emergent data. This allows for the locating and understanding of relationships between differing aspects of social life (Layder 2005: 146). In the context of this study this relates to the experiences and perceptions of a sample of operational dyslexic police officers from across England and Wales.

The model adopted allows for the interrogation of these components of social life. As Layder reminds us, social reality can only be fully understood through the culmination of all four domains and not through the isolation or separation of a single domain (Layder 2005: 297). It requires more than a simple understanding of the four domains as described in Chapter One; it requires an understanding of the complex relationships between the domains. It is only through the synthesis of the domains that social reality can be fully recognised (ibid).

### **3.2.2 The Social Model of Disability**

A significant orientating theory of this study is that of the Social Model of Disability (SMD) as proposed by Mike Oliver (1990). This model was introduced earlier in this thesis. The SMD has been usefully described by Oliver (1996) and Finkelstein (2002) as a heuristic device, a means to assist in understanding the often difficult concept of disability and impairment (difference) in contemporary society (Barnes & Mercer 2004).

Oliver (1996) suggests that disability is not a state or condition but rather an exclusionary experience of people with impairments. Oliver (ibid) argues strongly that the exclusionary experience of many people with impairments (differences) is constructed through what he described as barriers. These include physical, organisational, institutional and attitudinal obstructions which disempower or exclude people from engaging in education, employment and recreational activities enjoyed by the non-disabled majority. The Social Model of Disability is a means of identifying 'power' in society. Layder's theory of domains, together with the application of Adaptive Theory, is an ideal mechanism through which the barriers which result in discrimination and oppression can be illuminated (Layder 2005).

### **3.2.3. An Exploratory and Qualitative Study**

The dearth of reported studies which have sought to inquire into the lived experiences of dyslexic police officers was identified in Chapter Two previously. On this basis an exploratory approach has been adopted (Sarantakos 2005: 11). A similar exploratory method was applied in two comparable and yet unconnected studies; Morris and Turnbull (2007: 39) and Stanley et al (2007) focused upon the disclosure of hidden disabilities including dyslexia amongst caring professionals. David and Sutton (2011: 11) suggest that an exploratory approach to research includes a 'degree of exploration together with description'.

A qualitative approach provides a means through which the voices of the participants can be heard through their descriptions and accounts of personal experiences and perceptions. The qualitative approach provides a means through which rich or thick description of experience and perceptions can be and enables the questions at the centre of this study to be addressed (Bryman 2008: 437). In simple terms, words were needed rather than numbers. It is the lived and felt experiences of the dyslexic police officers that this study

seeks to understand. An exploratory, qualitative framework provides the solid theoretical and practical foundations upon which this study is built.

### **3.3 The Research Strategy**

#### **3.3.1. A Participatory Model**

Barnes (2004) argues that traditional academic processes must be reversed by allowing disabled research participants control over research funding, process and agenda. I share the view of Barnes (2004) when he argues that disability related research should not remain the domain of the elitist academic who has, perhaps unintentionally or at the very least unwittingly, added to the oppression of disabled people. Abberley (1992: 141) supports the assertion of Barnes that disabled people have often been treated as 'passive research objects' by the academy. Oliver (1993: 65) argues that participatory research can only "be facilitated by establishing a partnership between researchers and those being researched". The participation and active involvement of dyslexic police officers is central to development of the research focus of this current study.

I share the view of Fleming & Ward (2004: 163) when they suggest that empowerment operates at both the individual and collective levels. We share a common belief that people can gain greater control over their lives when they have a greater understanding of the power and in the case of this study, the barriers and oppression that they experience in their day to day lives. Fundamental to this research is that the dyslexic police officers who participate in this study are able to feel a degree of ownership and control. The involvement of the participants in terms of setting the research agenda, focus and priorities went some way towards achieving this desire. It was further developed through the discussions prior to, during and following the data collection phases of this study. Perhaps through their participation they achieve a greater understanding of their own experience. As Fleming and Ward (2004: 163) suggest "it is about moving out of taken-for-granted assumptions that we

cannot achieve change, to understanding and experiencing that there are possibilities for development and change". From this point, self-validation and a desire to challenge the status quo may hopefully follow for some participants.

The terms 'Emancipatory and Participatory' Research are seen throughout much of the disability studies literature during the past two decades, and one could be forgiven for believing that the terms are interchangeable (Stalker 1998). If researchers are to answer the calls for Emancipatory or Participatory research within disability studies as demanded by Barnes & Mercer 2003 and Stone and Priestly 1996, then the researcher must be clear as to the similarities and essential differences between these terms. Northway (2000: 28) offers an enlightening narrative on the similarities and asserted differences between the two concepts. I support Northway's (Ibid) view that the key difference is one of Control (Emancipatory) and Involvement (Participatory). I also share Northway's position that the two concepts are not discrete or opposite but rather at different but connected stages on a continuum, where the key difference is possibly emphasis or interpretation (Kiernan 1999).

French and Swain (1997: 31) and Stone and Priestly (1996: 706) provide a series of questions that those planning to undertake disability related research must consider. These questions and statements are presented in Table 5 below:

Core Principles of Participatory Research	
French and Swain (1997: 31)	Stone and Priestly (1996: 706)
Does the research promote disabled people's control over the decision-making processes, which shape their lives?	The evolution of control over research production to ensure full accountability to disabled people and their organisations;
	The willingness to only undertake research where it will be of practical benefit to the self-empowerment of disabled people and/or the removal of disabling barriers;
Does the research support disabled people in their struggle against oppression and the removal of barriers to equal opportunities and a full participatory democracy for all?	Giving voice to the personal as political whilst endeavouring to collectivise the political commonality of individual experiences;
Does the research address concerns of disabled people themselves?	The willingness to adopt a plurality of methods for data collection and analysis in response to the changing needs of disabled people.
	The adoption of a social model of disablement as the epistemological basis for research production and the surrender of claims to objectivity through overt political commitment to the struggles of disabled people for self-emancipation;

Table 5: Principles of Participatory Research

As I have stated previously, this current research is not a 'smash and grab' exercise: participants are not considered to be inert tools but rather people with unique insights and experiences of the social world. James Charlton (2000: 3) in his seminal work 'Nothing About Us Without Us' cautions disability study scholars that from the experience of the Civil Rights Movement "It's when others speak for you, you lose". Participatory research requires, demands, an approach that is more than mere consultation or the superficial involvement with the researched community. The principles of participation underpin and

inform the research strategy. I remain cognisant of the words of caution offered by Mike

Oliver:

“Disability research should not be seen as a set of technical objective procedures carried out by 'experts' but part of the struggle by disabled people to challenge the oppression they currently experience in their lives” Oliver (1992: 102)

I did not, as Oliver (1992, 1997), suggests need to ‘handover control’ of the research to the research participants in this study for very specific reasons. I am a member of the group being researched. I am dyslexic and at the time that this study began I was a police officer. Thirdly, the research questions and foci come directly from my extended contact with dyslexic police officers over more than a decade.

What I have done is to actively include dyslexic police officers in every stage of this study. They have directed this research through its inception by way of on-going, informal dialogue and through constant requests for assistance and support from individual police officers, their staff representatives and employers alike. It is the contact with dyslexic police officers that has informed, shaped and driven this research based upon their reported priorities and experience. I thus describe my research strategy as principally participatory but with a hope and desire that a degree of empowerment might follow.

### 3.3.2. An 'Adaptive' Approach

Layder (2005) sets out eight core features of Adaptive Theory. These are presented in Table 6:

1. Adaptive Theory is a synthetic approach which borrows from a number of others but also provides a distinctive alternative to them.
2. Adaptive Theory is 'middle-range' in terms of immediate focus but has an 'open-ended' relation with larger-scale or more inclusive theories or types of research.
3. Adaptive Theory both shapes, and is shaped by the empirical data that emerges from research. It allows for a dual influence of extant theory (theoretical models) as well as those that unfold from (and are unfolded in) the research. Adaptive theorising is an ever present feature of the research process.
4. Adaptive Theory uses both inductive and deductive procedures for developing and elaborating theory.
5. It rests upon an epistemological position which is neither positivist nor interpretivist.
6. It embraces both objectivism and subjectivism in terms of its ontological presuppositions.
7. It assumes that the social world is complex, multi-faceted (layered) and densely compacted.
8. It focuses on the multifarious interconnections between human agency, social activities and social organisations (structures and systems).

**Table 6: Eight Key Points of Adaptive Theory (Layder 2005: 132)**

The principles of Adaptive Theory have influenced all phases of this study from initial planning, consultation, field-work and data analysis through to the writing of the conclusion and recommendations. Although there are apparent conflicts between the principles of participatory research as espoused by Stone and Priestly (1996) (described previously) and key aspects of Adaptive Theory (2005) these are reconciled when Layder's' definitions and interpretations of core terms are reviewed. On first assessment, an acknowledgement and embracing of both subjective and objective ontological presuppositions appears to be at odds with the demands of disability writers who argue vehemently that only the subjective



experience is valid. What Layder (ibid) suggests is contrary to the taken for granted interpretation of objectivism. Instead Layder (2005: 141) suggests that Adaptive Theory encompasses what he described as a moderate form of objectivism.

“The moderate version of objectivism merely assumes that social reality is composed of both subjective and objective aspects and that they both condition and influence each other since they are deeply interwoven” (Layder 2005: 141)

A further potential conflict is Layder’s proposal that the epistemological basis is neither positivist nor interpretivist. Stone and Priestly (1996) assert that the Social Model of Disability should be the epistemological basis for research production. Adaptive Theory allows for a ‘critical’ epistemological position and therefore is one which embraces the core aspects and characteristics of the Social Model of Disability.

### **3.4 Research Design**

Two research instruments were used to collect the data in this qualitative study. The first is a self-completion questionnaire and the second is a semi-structured interview. The selection of these instruments is based on the type of data required to answer the research questions and is directly linked to the methodological and theoretical foundations that I have described above. This study required data which was both rich and thick in terms of descriptions of experience and perceptions (Lawson and Garrod 1994: 218). Alternative means of data collection were considered including focus groups, diaries and observations. These were rejected on the basis that they would not capture the depth and richness of data required for this study and that their use might be exclusionary to the dyslexic participants. The two instruments used to collect the data are described in the following sections.

### **3.4.1. The Self-Completion Questionnaire**

Bryman (2008: 698) defines this type of questionnaire simply as an instrument “that the respondent answers without the aid of an interviewer”. The questionnaire was developed for the purpose of gathering demographic and antecedent information from the participants. The participants were asked to provide basic information relating to their previous and current work within or outside of the police service. Specifically they were asked what aspects of police work they enjoyed and what duties, tasks or activities they experienced difficulty in undertaking. Additional questions concerned the details of any educational attainment followed by a number of questions that specifically related to the participants’ experience of dyslexia screening and or assessment. The final questions related to disclosure of dyslexia and experience in the police service in which they have or are serving and specifically any Reasonable Adjustments that have been requested, provided or denied. Feedback from the pilot questionnaires proved invaluable in the instrument development process. I used the feedback from the pilot questionnaire to refine and further develop this instrument: for example I initially asked a question regarding the use of Reasonable Adjustment. Feedback from the pilot indicated that I needed to explain what I meant by this term. The final version of the questionnaire includes a brief explanation of this term prior to the question. The piloting process also proved to be a very useful rehearsal for the development of the interview guide that is discussed in Section 3.4.2 below.

The data from the questionnaires was used to refine the research questions of this study as well as informing the development of the second data collection instrument (Davis & Sutton 2011: 243). This engagement allowed participants to shape, steer and direct the focus of the study and is clearly linked to the principles of participatory research. The use of the questionnaire allowed participants to answer the questions in their own time and at their own convenience, they could of course choose not to answer any question. It is possible that the completion of the questionnaire prior to any subsequent interview may reduce any

initial interviewer effect (Bryman 2008: 698). The format and structure of the questionnaire is explained in Section 3.6.1.

Arksey & Knight (1999: 17) suggest that the use of questionnaires can be an 'inferior' method of collecting experience data in social research. Answers cannot be immediately checked for meaning or clarification for example. In acknowledging the limitations of the questionnaire I was clear that it would be used in a limited capacity and therefore was fit for purpose. In the development of this instrument I was minded that I would not be with the participant when they answered the questions and so clarity of instruction and questions were key to generating appropriate responses (Kalof et al 2008: 119). The questionnaire was therefore developed with the principal aims of:

- Framing the research and preparing for the interview (Kvale 1996: 127)
- Generating and collecting 'antecedence' data from the participants,
- Confirming the accuracy and detail of previously obtained data,
- Providing the participant with details of the research focus,
- Providing the participant with an opportunity to make comments outside of the face-to-face interview situation,
- Providing the participant with an opportunity to withdraw from the study.

An early consideration was that the questionnaire should be available in a variety of formats to meet the differing needs of the participants. The commitment to the principles of inclusion was at the forefront of my thinking as I developed the various versions of the questionnaire. A copy of the final questionnaire is included as Appendix Six. I followed the recommendations and guidance offered by Kalof et al (2008: 121) and Bryman (2008: 224) in developing an instrument by following a logical process and line of questioning from simple to complex questions. Due to the number of questions I divided the instrument into two sections. Each section included a short informative text to explain exactly what was required. Twenty six questions were asked in total; first name and family name represented

two questions. The use of the questionnaire is discussed in Section 3.6.1 later in this chapter.

### **3.4.2. The Semi-Structured Interview Guide**

Arksey & Knight (1999: 6) and Denscombe (2010: 175) describe three types of interview that are frequently used by researchers in the social sciences: Structured, Semi-structured and Unstructured interviews. Both Arksey & Knight (1996) and Burgess (1984) argue that the employment of a particular technique must be considered against the backdrop of the research design. Further; May (1997) suggests that the choice and appropriateness of the adoption and employment of an interview type must be built upon the underpinning ontological and epistemological perspectives and positions of the researcher.

Semi-structured interviews were developed and used in this study. Arksey & Knight (1999) suggest that this approach is the most common within the social sciences and are more closely aligned to the principles of unstructured than structured interviews. They argue that semi-structured interviews can generate rich qualitative data of the type required in this study (ibid). Unlike the fixed question and response nature of the structured interview and the loose or potentially abstract nature of unstructured interviews, the semi-structured interview, with its specific but flexible agenda, affords the researcher the flexibility to pursue a particular strand of enquiry and yet still allows for a degree of comparability during the analysis stage.

The advantage and strength of using semi-structured interviews is that it allows the researcher to probe, clarify and ask follow-up questions that are not on the interview guide (Kalof, Dan & Dietz 2008: 126, Taylor & Bogdan 1998: 98). The questions to be asked are specified, nevertheless the interviewer and interviewee are free to move beyond initial answers (May 1997: 111). Miller & Glassner (2004: 137) suggest “that a strength of

qualitative interviewing is the opportunity it provides to collect and vigorously examine narrative accounts of social worlds”.

In the context of this study the semi-structured interview guide was designed and developed to both collect and rigorously examine the narrative accounts of dyslexic police officers as they describe their experiences and perceptions of disclosure and of being dyslexic within the police service. The semi-structured approach allows the interviewer to pursue and probe interviewees’ answers, even where they do not naturally follow the shape of the intended interview. This degree of flexibility affords the interviewee with the authority and control to change the direction of the interview. This is especially important where the interviewee raises an issue or topic that was not expected or anticipated by the interviewer (Whyte, 1982: 111).

The terms interview schedule and interview guide are sometimes used interchangeably (Robson 1993, Kalof et al 2008). Bryman (2008: 695) simply defines an interview schedule as “a collection of questions designed to be asked by an interviewer” He goes on to suggest that “an interview schedule is always used in a structured interview”. Bryman (ibid) defines an Interview Guide as “a brief list of memory prompts of areas to be covered that is often employed in unstructured Interviewing”. Bryman (ibid) further suggests that the interview guide is used as a “somewhat more structured list of issues to be addressed or questions to be asked in semi-structured interviews”. I acknowledge the similarity of both terms and respect Alan Bryman’s definitions and in this study I use the term Interview guide to describe the instrument that was used within the interview.

The guidance of Kvale (1996, Kvale & Brinkmann 2009) and the imaginative and clear writing of Robson (1993) were highly influential in the development of the interview guide A copy of the pilot guide is included at Appendix Seven. As a starting point I re-examined the overarching principle and supplementary questions that are at the heart of this study. These

questions demand descriptions or narrative accounts of feelings, experiences and perceptions. I decided on the use of mainly open-ended questions that would allow the participant the freedom and opportunity to express their answers without constraint. In simple terms an open-ended question is one that suggests an answer which is more substantial than Yes – No – Don't Know. I am exploring the feelings, perceptions and experiences of the interviewee and therefore I require their cooperation and engagement. The use of open questions can be problematic both for the interviewee and the interviewer (Denscombe 2010: 165). These types of questions can make more demands upon the interviewee by requiring them to concentrate and think more fully and longer about an answer. This could reduce the interviewees' willingness to fully answer subsequent questions or participate further in the study. The potential challenge to the interviewer is that this type of question can generate a high volume of data which will require analysis (ibid: 166).

A draft interview guide was created which followed the direction of both Kvale (1996: 127) and Robson (1993: 234) in that the context of the interview should be included and made explicit at the start of all interviews. The interview guide includes a brief outline of the research and the purpose and practicalities of the interview. This includes seeking permission from the interviewees to allow the digital recording of the interview and for the ten minutes or so afterwards. Further; it includes a reminder that the interviewee does not have to answer any question for any reason and that the interview can be terminated with any reason being offered or requested. A copy of the final interview guide is included at Appendix Eight.

The interview guide, as with the questionnaire, was developed and at each stage reviewed by dyslexic colleagues. One colleague suggested that I amend the sequence in which the questions were asked so as create a logical and natural flow from one theme to another. In

this way I continued to involve the dyslexic adults in the development of the research as is mandated if one is to follow the principles of active participation and to embed the principles of empowerment research as provided by Stone and Priestly (1996) and French and Swain (1997: 31)

### **3.5 Sampling and Recruitment**

In this section I describe the type of sampling adopted for this study, the engagement of the participants and finally the number of participants in this study. Non-probability, purposive sampling is the primary methodology of generating a cohort for this study. It is supported to a lesser degree by snowball sampling. Sarantakos (2005: 164) suggests that adopting a purposive sampling methodology allows the researcher to choose subjects who in their opinion are relevant to the project. Purposeful (homogeneous) sampling (Yates 2004: 27, Robson, 1993: 142) was selected for a number of reasons: the number of dyslexic police officers in England and Wales is not known. Even if Police Forces collected such data, it would be reliant upon personal disclosure and as the research of Stanley et al (2007) concluded, not all dyslexic people disclose to their employer. The entire population of England and Wales has not been formally assessed and therefore the true number of dyslexic people cannot be known. The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) suggests that ten percent of the population of the United Kingdom may be dyslexic (BDA 2013). Interestingly the data collected from one Higher Education Establishment, that has trained and educated police officers between 2006 and the first quarter of 2013, identified that a minimum of thirty-nine percent of the police officers and police community support officers have been assessed as dyslexic during their studies (Sharpe 2013).

In this section I will address the concerns raised by Bryman (2008: 458) when he suggests that many qualitative researchers are not explicit in explaining how participation in the sample was secured. A minimum sample size of between twenty and thirty is recommended

by Warren (2002: 99) for this type of exploratory qualitative study. The sample size utilised in similar studies undertaken by experienced research teams was an important factor in deciding upon the eventual sample size. Morris & Turnbull (2007: 35) selected a sample of eighteen student nurses whereas Stanley et al (2007: 13) selected a sample of sixty nurses, teachers and social workers. At an early stage the participants numbered thirty. Five potential participants withdrew from the study at a very early stage for reasons which included moving overseas, developing cancer and tragically, one died unexpectedly. From the initial contacts and discussions a cohort of twenty-five serving and retired police officers agreed to participate in this study.

Layder (1998) supports the purposive approach to sampling in research where the numbers are generally unknown and this too was a factor in deciding my approach. Since the summer of 2000 I have had contact in various forms with in excess of three hundred serving or retired dyslexic police officers and police community support officers from England & Wales. I did not keep records of the majority of these communications or interactions. These discussions primarily took place at a regional police training centre initially operated by National Police Training which was later rebadged as Centrex – Central Police Training & Development Agency. I have described my work at the regional police training centre above. At least two years had passed between my provision of support and requesting their participation in future research. At the commencement of this study I contacted each officer or retired police officer individually, as described previously. I explained the nature and purpose of my research. I asked these initial contacts if they knew of any other police officers, who are dyslexic, serving or retired who might be interested in participating in or learning more about this research. I sent a detailed study information sheet to those who indicated that they were interested in participating in this study (Appendix Two).



The purposive approach was supported to a lesser extent through a snowballing technique (Robson 1993). Participants in this study contacted dyslexic peers who in turn joined the study. Lee (1993) suggests that for stigmatized or vulnerable groups, trusted intermediaries who can vouch for the researcher are an important part of the research process. This snowballing sample technique (Robson 1993: 142; Bryman 2008: 458) attracted five additional participants.

There is significant demographic variety in the personal characteristics, attributes, experiences and work locations of the participants in this study. I believe that this adds to the quality and resilience of this current study which is explored more fully in Section 3.7 below. The participants come from a range of police forces across England & Wales. They work or have worked in a number of specialist departments within the police service; some work in inner-cities whilst others police rural communities. They are of various ranks within the police service. There is a substantial age range as well as age and mix of gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation. This eclectic collection of personal attributes or characteristics has not been manufactured or produced deliberately but has occurred through my engagement with dyslexic police officers over the past decade. I believe that the wide variations in personal attributes, characteristics and police experience strengthen this study. However all the participants share the experience of serving, or having served, as police officers and having been assessed as dyslexic.

It is customary for pen pictures of research participants to be included either within the body of a thesis or as an appendix. I have not included this information anywhere in this thesis for reasons of confidentiality. The rationale for this decision is provided in Section 3.7 below.

### **3.6 Executing the Research Strategy**

A two stage process was developed; in stage one a self-completion questionnaire was devised and piloted. It was then used with all participants to obtain antecedent information

and information related to specific personal experience, as described in Section 3.4.1 above. The data collected from the questionnaires was initially analysed and this was used to develop the semi-structured interview guide. The effect and limitations of the two stage process are described in the sections below.

### **3.6.1. The Questionnaires**

Participants were offered the questionnaire in a variety of formats and styles, which included:

- Verbally-by telephone or audio recording,
- Written by hand or typed,
- In a wide range of paper colour options
- In a wide range of font shapes and sizes.

They could also receive the questionnaire by post (on paper or on a memory device) or by email. Additionally participants were invited to suggest an alternative format. Where the questionnaires were requested in an electronic format the text boxes were not limited in size. The default font was Comic Sans size twelve with a line spacing of one and a half. The questionnaire format was not locked or password protected so that the participants could manipulate the content and structure to meet their personal preference. This allowed the font shape, size and spacing to be amended. Importantly it allowed for every aspect of the questionnaire to be spell-checked. Finally the format was compatible with the majority of 'voice-to-text' and 'text-to-voice' software for example Dragon Naturally Speaking and TextHelp.

Twenty of the participants completed the questionnaire using word processing software. No participant opted for the telephone completion option; nor did any participant request a format other than one that I had originally offered. The questionnaire made clear that spelling and grammar were not being assessed or considered and that it was the content

that was the single most important factor for me. At this stage all of the participants were aware that I am dyslexic.

The original paper version of the instrument consisted of seven pages of A4 paper. This is supported by Kalof et al (2008: 125) who suggest that a postal questionnaire should be less than ten pages in total. The number of pages was dictated by the use of wide margins, the Comic Sans font and text size twelve. The electronic version of the instrument completed by many of the participants contained expandable text boxes. No participant completed or exceeded ten pages. At the end of the instrument I offered thanks to the participant and provided my contact details in case they wished to discuss their completion with me.

All twenty five participants completed the questionnaires. A copy of the simple questionnaire format form is included at Appendix Six. Prior to the dispatch of the questionnaire a research Information Document was sent together with an Informed Consent Form. These documents were offered in a variety of formats as described above. Questionnaires were not distributed until Informed Consent Forms had been signed and returned. Stamped addressed envelopes were provided where necessary as I did not want any participant to incur any financial penalty at any stage of the research process.

The completed questionnaires provided me with the information that I had intended it to provide. I am comfortable with the fact that the substantial time and effort invested in the development and piloting of the questionnaire was rewarded with the quantity and quality of data that was provided by the participants. The key themes that emerged from the initial analysis of the completed questionnaires were:

- Disclosure
- Self-Perception, confidence and professionalism
- Statements, Reports and Interviews
- Reasonable Adjustments

These themes directly informed the refinement of the research questions which underpin this study. They were used to inform the second phase of the data collection, the face-to-face interviews. The areas of focus are not completely grounded in data collected from the questionnaires but linked to both my engagements with dyslexic police officers over ten years together with the findings and conclusions of the research conducted and reported by Morris and Turnbull (2007) and Stanley et al (2007) described previously. This is an example of where Layder's (1998) Adaptive Theory allows for the acceptance and acknowledgement of prior or extant theory and knowledge as well as allowing for the development of new conceptions and theory. Prior to this study I would have been able to identify the four areas of focus listed above based upon my engagements with dyslexic police officers. Striking similar themes were identified in the studies conducted by Morris & Turnbull (2007) as well as Stanley et al (2007). Being aware of these issues (extant knowledge) allowed me to formulate questions for inclusion in the questionnaire. I also ensured that I provided space and opportunity for participants to present their own issues and priorities too. I was sensitised to the effect that my own experiences as a dyslexic police officer (although I was unaware that I was dyslexic for the majority of my careers in both the Military and civil police services) should not override or influence the themes identified by the participants through their completion of this questionnaire. My influence on this study and my dyslexic identity are considered in Section 3.8 later in this chapter.

### **3.6.2. The Face-to-Face Interviews**

The development and piloting of the interview guide followed a similar format to that of the questionnaire which I described above. The model espoused by Sarantakos (2005: 254) was subsumed into the model of instrument development suggested by both Kvale (1996) and Robson (1993)

The draft interview guide was piloted and this contained twenty two questions (Appendix Seven). Two further interview guides were piloted and the final version of the guide contained sixteen questions (Appendix Eight). The entire interview data collected in the pilot phases of the interview guide development and were analysed alongside the post-pilot interviews. At the pilot stage all aspects of the interview process were tested and this included not only the testing of the instrument but also the use of the dual recording devices.

In addition to recording the interviews I also made personal field notes, some very briefly during the interview but principally soon after the interview was concluded. I followed the direction of Kvale (1996) and Bryman (2008) in spending between ten and fifteen minutes writing 'quick and dirty' notes and observations on the interview as a process, as a social interaction and upon issues and matters that were memorable and relevant to the study. Additional information includes the venue, time of day, interviewer's feelings and overall assessment of the activity. These are a combination of hand written notes, typed comments and verbally recorded observations. These were subsequently revisited during the transcription and analysis phases of this study to assist me in visualising the interview. It also proved helpful in the contextualising of the specific interview so that the audio or text of the interview were not cold and isolated but remained human and personal.

Due to dispersal of participants across England and Wales no single venue was considered appropriate for all of the interviews. Participants were each asked for a preference of interview venue. Seven interviews took place at participant's homes; four at police premises, nine at hotels and ten on university premises. Due to the variety in location I had little choice but to fit in with the local surroundings and adapt the interview to the location. The interviews conducted at the university were conducted in a private tutorial room away from my own office and department. This was to ensure that the interview was not disturbed

by visitors or those who ignored the signs posted on the doors requesting that we not be disturbed or interrupted. At all venues I provided bottled water, cups and a pack of tissues.

Those interviews that took place at the participant's home or family address were more open to domestic interruptions. Although the choice of interviewing at a family home is not ideal it was done so as to allow participants control and active involvement in the research and interview processes. The interviewee made the decision as to where the interview took place. This devolution of control is an important aspect in participatory research and is directly and demonstrably a deliberate application of the empowerment principles demanded by Stone and Priestly (1996: 706). I was eager and pleased that none of the interviews took place in police station interview rooms as I did not want the interview to be directly associated with the type of high pressure police interviewing that the participants were accustomed to as a routine aspect of operational policing.

All interviews were audio recorded using a pair of digital audio recording devices as recommended by Bryman (2008: 451) Denscombe (2010: 188). Digital recordings generally offer a much clearer and sharper quality of recording than traditional analogue devices or cassette tapes. Super high-quality recording settings were utilised so as to achieve the most detailed recording possible. The reason that two devices were used is that I have experienced unexplained device failure in a previous study and so from that point onwards I always use two independent recording devices. The extra device also acts as a useful resource when an interviewee answers a question more quietly and one device does not capture the comment. It lends itself to improved accuracy and also avoids the risk of losing all of the valuable data (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight (2010: 196). In practice the dual recording approach was successful in twenty-four of the twenty-five interviews. For reasons which are still unknown both digital recording devices failed during one interview. Although they were checked periodically and discreetly during the early stages of the interview both stopped

recording after fifteen minutes of interviewing. At the conclusion of this interview I thanked the participant for their engagement and after they had left the venue I spent approximately one hour frantically writing field notes.

The interviews took place between February and July 2009. The shortest duration of any interview was just under one hour with the longest taking a few minutes over three hours. The average interview lasted an hour and forty minutes. The total audio recording time exceeded sixty hours. In total the data collected in this study and used to address the research questions amounted to twenty-five self-completed questionnaires, seventy pages of mostly hand written field notes and approximately sixty hours of digital quality audio recordings.

All interviews were subsequently transcribed. The transcripts were anonymised and the participants were given pseudonyms. All interviews appeared in the same electronic format. (Denscombe 2010). After each transcription the script was offered to most of the research participants who were invited to make amendments, corrections or comments. This 'member checking' is linked to the principles and ethos of a participatory research methodology (Dyson and Brown 2006). The difficulties presented by the process of transcription is discussed more fully in Section 3.10.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations and Guiding Principles**

Throughout this study I remained sensitised to the proposition of Robson (1993: 29) when he suggests that the words Ethics and Morals can be used interchangeably when one is driven to act 'properly'. I applied this principle to every aspect of the research process with a clear commitment to not only doing the right thing for the right reasons but also to acting in a way that did not cause actual or potential harm to anyone involved directly or indirectly

with this study. I believe that this is only partially possible as one cannot anticipate all potential harm, however I also believe that by remaining 'alive and alert' to potential issues then one can avoid most harmful activities or consequences. I was guided by a deontological ethical position in this study, that is to say that I believe that certain acts will always be good and or bad, in and of themselves (Bryman 2008:116). Dishonesty, deception, abuse of power or authority and applying pressure will always be wrong in any aspect of social and specifically participatory research.

Diener and Crandall (1978: 37) suggest four specific areas that should be considered when planning and conducting social research:

- Whether there is harm to anyone
- Whether there is a lack of informed consent
- Whether there is an invasion of privacy
- Whether deception is involved

In the context of this research, harm is not limited to physical hurt, suffering or pain but includes emotional distress, anxiety and disturbance. The risk or potential for harm was considered throughout the whole research process and not just at the data collection phase (Denscombe 2010: 331). Ethical approval was sought and secured from the De Montfort University Higher Degrees Committee in 2006. As a central tenet of this process I set out a clear and detailed statement as to the intended actions and activities related to this study. Within it I outlined a number of potential risks and ethical considerations and identified how these were to be addressed. In seeking and securing ethical approval to conduct this research I embraced the guidelines for ethical research as set out by the British Sociological Association and the British Society of Criminology. The Ethics Committee also viewed agreed copies of the Informed Consent Form and research information sheet. Approval was secured without conditions.



The potential for causing distress from outing a dyslexic police officer provides a clear example of how I sought to avoid the risk of harm. I was aware in the early stages of planning this research, that a number of potential participants had made the decision not to disclose a diagnosis of dyslexia to their employer. This knowledge had been gained during on-going informal contacts with dyslexic police officers who had sought my help, advice and support since 2000. On this basis I took the decision to contact potential participants by personal mobile phone calls or text messages in the first instance, simply asking them to contact me. No reference was made as to the nature of the proposed contact in case the message was intercepted by someone who was not aware of the diagnosis.

My position, status or research area was not disclosed at this stage. Where mobile numbers were not available, simple and basic emails were used inviting potential participants to contact me via a phone number only. No university details or other identifying details were left. All of the text messages and emails sent received a response from the intended recipient. The risk of 'outing' a dyslexic police officer was my primary concern at this stage and is directly linked to my commitment to confidentiality and doing no harm.

### **3.7.1. Informed Consent**

Obtaining the Informed Consent of participants was an important factor in securing the sample in this study. Denscombe (2010: 333) once again offers clear and precise guidance with regards to good practice in terms of Informed Consent when he suggests that participants must be:

- Made aware that participation is voluntary.
- Provided with adequate information about the research.
- Made aware of the kind of commitment that is required.
- Provided with a consent form.

In this study all potential and actual participants were told explicitly verbally and in writing that participation in this study must be completely and unconditionally voluntary. They were initially provided with a verbal overview of the research, the type and level of participation that might be required and that they could withdraw from the study at any point without offering or being asked for any reason. These points were followed up in writing through the provision of a detailed 'participant information sheet' (Appendix Two) and an Informed Consent Form (Appendix Three).

All participants were provided with the information sheet and consent form prior to attending any engagements with the researcher. These documents were offered in either a digital or paper format. Where documents were posted to participants, they were sent to an address which they provided under a 'Private and Confidential' heading. This process was to allow potential participants to read through the documents in their own time and to have the time and space to consider their participation away from the researcher (Bryman 2008: 122).

The documents were printed on cream coloured paper using Comic Sans, font size 12 on single sided A4 paper. All potential participants were provided with two copies of the Informed Consent Form and the information sheet. Each document was clearly marked as for signing and return or for retention by the participant. All participants were provided with a stamped addressed envelope and given the choice of posting the signed and dated consent and information sheet or to take it along to any subsequent meeting or interview.

Participants were also invited to ask any questions with regards to the research, at any time, by phone, email or text message. Finally, my commitment to preventing or reducing risk of harm included financial implications.

### **3.7.2. Confidentiality**

Confidentiality linked to the rights of privacy was also at the forefront of considerations throughout every stage of this research (Bryman 2008: 124). However I did not at any stage

guarantee any participant anonymity or confidentiality, I believe that this would have been misleading and potentially dishonest (Bryman 2008: 124). Denscombe (2010: 341) also warns the researcher against making such promises that they may not be able to keep.

Within the research information sheet I set out how I would strive to ensure confidentiality and anonymity and that all information would be treated with respect and dignity. All participants' information remains stored in a designated electronic password protected folder. All documents are encrypted. All audio files are secured in a similar folder and this is also password protected. A back-up copy is also secured on disc together with various versions of forms, notes and miscellaneous papers. In practice I applied codenames to each of the participants and applied these names to the data. The codenames and actual names were kept separate using different passwords and were encrypted. With regards to emails to police controlled addresses I only used these at the express request of the participant. Despite these requests I ensured that the research activity and subject of the study were not included beyond what was necessary.

Confidentiality is linked to harm or the risk of harm in the context of this study. A number of participants had chosen not to disclose the diagnosis of dyslexia to their employer; any disclosure would be a breach of trust and could have resulted in unwanted attention and questions, bullying and questions relating to integrity (not disclosing dyslexia). Further, the data collected includes current and retired police officers' sensitive information including home addresses. Any breach or disclosure would have the potential to present a physical, emotional, professional and financial risk to the participant and their family. Confidentiality and a commitment to exceeding the basic requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 were central to my interaction with participants, the data and all other information generated or gathered in the course of this study.

### 3.7.3. Quality, Rigour and the Research Process

The concepts of Validity, Reliability and Generalizability are well worn within the fields of quantitative and qualitative research activity. However there is some debate as to whether the terms are equally relevant to both approaches or indeed whether there is another way of testing the quality of research activity. Robson (1993) and (Bryman 2008) suggest that validity, reliability and generalizability are better suited or more appropriate when applied in quantitative research situations. Mason (1996: 21) disagrees and argues that they are relevant and applicable to both approaches to research and suggests that they have a very similar meaning in both paradigms.

Mason (ibid) is of course not alone in holding this position. Critics of the 'one size fits both' position include Guba and Lincoln (1994) and (Yardley 2000) who argue for an alternative, *qualitative specific*, paradigm which should be used to establish and test the quality of qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985), Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest two specific foci or concepts: *Trustworthiness* and *Authenticity*. These concepts were adopted for this study due to their closeness of fit to both domain theory and the adaptive approach applied (Layder 2005).

### 3.7.4. Trustworthiness

The criteria included within Guba and Lincoln's (ibid) concept of Trustworthiness, Credibility, Transferability and Dependability. I believe that the inclusion of multiple interviews and the completion of questionnaires adds to the trustworthiness of the research and specifically addresses the criteria of *Credibility*, *Transferability* and *Dependability*, outlined by Bryman (2008: 377)

When considering Credibility specifically, I take into account the multiple accounts of a social reality; the negative experience of disclosure is an example in this current study. Credibility is reinforced through what Kalof et al (2008: 162) describe as 'member checking'.

This was achieved through the sharing of a copy of the interview audio recording and a typed transcript with the participants and the seeking of confirmation, clarification and general agreement as to the substance and essence of the interview conversation and subsequent transcription. Peer debriefing is also a factor in this study. In addition to discussing my research progress and process with my supervision team, I also discussed many of the issues with fellow academics and dyslexic colleagues and non-participants. These discussions afforded me the opportunity to clarify my thinking and to progress ideas through collegiate dialogue or simply verbalising my thoughts and ideas (Kalof et al 2008: 162).

A final, yet highly relevant consideration is that of negative case analysis (ibid). Negative case analysis is necessitated by purposely sought or spontaneously appearing pieces of data that differ from the researcher's expectations, assumptions, or working theories (Brodsky 2008). In this study a small number of participants described what they considered to be positive and empowering experiences of being dyslexic within the police service. The inclusion of such cases is both necessary and appropriate in terms of credibility of process and analysis. These cases were not specifically sought out (Kalof 2008: 162) but were in fact gathered as a natural process of the purposive and snowball sampling techniques adopted in this study. Participants or potential participants were not excluded on the grounds that they had only positive experiences to report. That would have been morally and ethically wrong, dishonest and would have damaged the overall credibility of this study.

In terms of Transferability, this study is not concerned with generalizability of findings, but more with 'thick' description and 'rich' accounts of the feelings, experiences and perceptions of a cohort of dyslexic police officers (Lincoln & Guba 1985: 316, Geertz 1973). Whether or not the research findings from this study are applicable to another group of dyslexic police officers, or the same group at some point in the future is not a high priority of this current

study However, it is important that the 'rich and thick' descriptions of feelings, experiences and perceptions provided by the participants provide future researchers with a database or 'bank of knowledge' against which to judge the products of similar research.

I believe that the presentation and dissemination of this study will allow others to better understand the sample and setting (context) in which this study took place (Kalof et al 2008: 163). Linked to credibility above it is interesting to note that the sample is drawn not from one small geographical area that share the same or similar tutors, supervisors and managers but are in fact drawn from the far reaches of England and Wales and in the majority of cases the participants do not know other members of the cohort. I believe that this aspect is one of the key strengths of this current study.

In this study, Dependability (Bryman 2008: 378) is addressed by virtue of the punctilious manner in which I have documented and organised the whole research process; this includes theoretical considerations, practical activities and the writing phase followed by a personal critical review of the entire research process. Kalof et al (2008: 163) support my own view that Dependability in qualitative research reflects and is defined by "how truthful the researcher is and how truthful the research is". I took this point very seriously indeed and I acknowledge that I have a responsibility beyond the academic process to be honest and true in all aspects of this research study. This included my relationship with the participants during and after the study had been completed. I hold the view that these three criteria within the concept of Trustworthiness appear more relevant and appropriate to the current research than attempting to apply the traditional positivistic approach espoused by Mason (1996). Although sometimes challenging the application of these principles within this study was achieved.

### 3.8.5. Authenticity

Lincoln and Guba (1985: 318) argue that Authenticity in qualitative social research is achieved through the consideration and addressing of a small but significant number of criteria.

- Fairness
- Ontological Authenticity
- Educative Authenticity
- Catalytic Authenticity
- Tactical Authenticity

The first criterion is Fairness; in this study there are thirty participants who have shared their feelings, experience and perceptions. There is a degree of commonality in experience but equally there are many examples of discrete and very different feelings and perceptions with the researcher. In this study each participant is valued equally and thus the viewpoint of all participants are represented (Bryman 2008: 379).

The second criterion is much harder to evaluate prior to the dissemination of the findings of this study to a broader audience. Ontological Authenticity means 'do the participants have a better understanding of their social situation'. In the context of this study this very issue is of vital importance and is at the heart of the research. An attempt to achieve this has been made through the process described earlier in this section whereby participants are encouraged to listen, read and make comments upon the interview. Further, the participants have been invited to a seminar at the university to hear about the findings of this study. It is too early to measure or qualify the success at this time.

The third criterion suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is Educative Authenticity. Put simply 'does this research help others to better understand the experiences of dyslexic police officers'? This was and remains a fundamental aim of this empowerment and participatory research. Peer reviewed journal articles, conference papers and public

lectures will follow the completion of this study. Throughout the research process papers have been delivered at both police related and international disability studies conferences. In addition over thirty workshops, designed to raise awareness of disability in the police, have been delivered to police forces, police units and local authorities across England and Wales (Hill 2006b, 2007, 2008, 2010b, 2011).

Catalytic Authenticity is the fourth criteria and relates directly to the empowerment of individuals and providing them with the *impetus* to challenge and change their social circumstances (Bryman 2008: 380). The key word here is *impetus*. Through discussion of the research findings with the participants and their voluntary attendance at the study seminar, I am hopeful that the *impetus* for change may follow, although I remain cautious and realistic to the challenges. I also hope that through the dissemination of the research findings that police forces and staff support groups may adopt a more sympathetic or empathetic approach to the issues of dyslexic staff. 'It will be argued that this is only part of what dyslexic police officers demand, which is, ultimately, an end to oppressive and discriminatory practices within the police services of England & Wales. I am realistic in my understanding of the dominance of police occupational culture and its power, and so I recognise that this may be a very long journey. Regardless, it will remain a key driver and aspiration of the researcher long after the research has been published.

The final criterion is Tactical Authenticity and this builds upon the previous criterion where *impetus* to change was the focus. This final criterion specifically asks whether the participants and others have been *empowered to take action* to challenge and change their social situations. The theme of authenticity and associated criteria are synonymous with the empowerment principles of participatory research suggested by Stone and Priestly (1996) which underpin the research method, methodology and strategy used in this study. It is too early to confirm or suggest that this has taken place, yet they remain at the heart of this



research. This is also linked to my intention to convert this study to a longitudinal study in the future.

It is clear criteria within the theme of Authenticity are appropriate for this study. I recognise that they are difficult to evidence as products or outcomes in practice. The theme that is threaded through authenticity is the application of the research to the lives of participants and specifically, emotional and practical empowerment. At this stage of the research it is much too early to honestly answer the questions raised despite my absolute aspiration and commitment to these goals. In view of the limitations described above an additional paradigm of quality and rigour was subsumed into the research process.

As was suggested earlier in this section Yardley (2000) was critical of the traditional positivist paradigm and suggested an alternative position from which the quality and effectiveness of qualitative social research can be assessed. Yardley (ibid) has proposed four criteria that should replace Validity, Reliability and Generalizability. The criteria offered by Yardley are: *Sensitivity to Context*, *Commitment and Rigour*, *Transparency and Coherence* and finally, *Impact and Importance*. These concepts have been interwoven with those of Lincoln & Guba (1985) and applied in this study.

Sensitivity and Context were addressed above and relate to the ethical and respectful processes that were pursued regarding the confidentiality of all data, my engagement with participants and finally through the application of my commitment to the empowerment and participatory ideologies that underpin and inform this study.

Commitment and Rigour were addressed through my engagement and interaction: with the literature, with the participants and through my engagement and interaction with the literature, with the participants and through the punctilious manner in which I have devised, piloted and used the data collection instruments. Additionally I have been transparent and

thorough in the analysis of the data and in only making claims that can be supported by the data.

Transparency and Coherence is achieved through the application of the participatory principles which underpin this study. My motivation, methods and research strategy are clearly documented. Reflexivity is central to this study and is discussed within the researcher biography in Section 3.8 below.

The assessment of Impact and Importance creates similar difficulties to those ascribed to the assessment of Authenticity and suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). I am unable at this early stage to measure or offer, with any degree of certainty, the impact that this study has made to the participants, their peers, the police service or the wider criminal justice sector. I can only suggest that I will work tirelessly to present this study to as wide an audience as possible through presentations, academic papers, police focused magazines and through police related workshops in the future. I would argue that the importance of this exploratory study has to be considered within the context of the growing number of Employment Tribunal and Employment Appeal Tribunals that are described in the national press and through the internet and more specifically through the increasing number of requests for help and support that I receive from police officers and staff from across England and Wales.

The decision to adopt, what some describe as controversial (Bryman 2008), alternatives to the traditional tests of validity, reliability and generalizability was not taken lightly. It was clear that the alternative concepts suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1985) and Yardley (2000) and very usefully described by Kalof et al (2008) were more appropriate and were more 'fit for purpose' in a participatory, empowerment approach to qualitative research. It is not suggested that there is a perfect fit. A difficulty remains in the later criteria where the researcher is expected to report the transformatory products of this study. I have not been

able to completely address these points but through the synthesis of the paradigms or alternative positions offered by Lincoln and Guba (1985), Guba and Lincoln (1994) together with that of Yardley (2000) I believe that I have achieved the best possible outcome.

The use of the word 'I' is important here because it is my interpretation and application of the paradigms that were applied to this study. I am not a cold, detached machine which operates autonomously and thoughtlessly outside of the research process but rather a cog within that machine. I did not come to this study with an empty metaphorical rucksack but rather as a human being with experience as a dyslexic child, adult, police officer, student and academic. The contents of my 'rucksack' and what I brought to this study are explored in Section 3.7 below.

### **3.8 Researcher Biography and the Concept of Reflexivity**

Two questions are central to this section of the thesis: Who am I and what did I bring to the study? In Chapter One I described my motivations and rationale for undertaking this study. However, this study is not about me and my own experiences of being dyslexic and a (former) police officer but about the experiences and perceptions of the participants who are dyslexic and police officers. I will revisit only those aspects of my own experience that I feel are necessary, at this point. These aspects are part of what I describe as 'the contents of my imaginary rucksack' and the process I use to examine them is reflexivity. Reflexivity in the context of this study is addressed in Section 3.8.1.

Every aspect of the research process, from initial concept through to publication and dissemination of findings is shaped by the personal and professional values of the researcher (Bryman 2008: 24). In accepting this assertion I now offer a brief personal biography from which the reader will be able to identify my position and standpoint within this research, in particular how my identity as a practitioner and insider researcher evolved through the period of this study. Chouhan (2009: 71) suggests that as individuals we need

to be aware of who we are and how we think and feel about others. Personal identity, our values, experiences and feelings mediate how we see and interpret others. In the context of this study, I perceive myself to be; a white, middle aged, working class, and heterosexual male. My primary and secondary educational attainment can at best be described as poor and disappointing. In every formal or semi-formal learning situation I have experienced difficulty with reading, spelling, learning definitions and transferring thoughts onto the page. To date I have no academic qualification in English language or literature.

I enlisted into the British Army, as a sixteen year old and served with the Military Police for eight years. I experienced great difficulty in completing the literacy aspects of my military police training. In operational practice I was frequently criticised for the poor quality of my statements and reports which I was frequently required to rewrite. I joined the Thames Valley Police in 1986 and served until my early retirement as a Police Sergeant in 2006. Once again I experienced substantial difficulty in the police learning environment where rote learning was demanded. Throughout my police career I also experienced difficulty with the literacy aspects of the operational role. The situation eased with the introduction of word processing software in the 1990s.

My life has been one of duty, service and following orders. In 1993 I sustained multiple injuries during a violent arrest which resulted in the label of 'disabled' being applied. Having run many marathons and been very fit and active I was now unable to exercise or engage in active recreational activities. I was unable to continue operational, front line police duties. This loss of function resulted in a paradigm shift in my thinking. For the first time I was subjected to oppressive barriers and restrictions. I challenged the police service application of oppressive and discriminatory processes with regards to advancement and I became the first British police officer with a permanent disability to be promoted to the rank of Sergeant in 2000. In the same year I commenced a secondment to a National Police Training Centre

where I was involved in the training and development of new police officers. As a result of many students reporting difficulty in learning and literacy activities I set up a dyslexia and learning support unit. Police training centres, at that time, had no form of learning support or disability units. Having experienced substantial difficulty in my initial training within the military and civilian police I decided to provide a place and space where trainee police officers could go for pastoral and learning support. It was not until three years later that I was assessed (diagnosed) as dyslexic.

My values and perceptions of disability were initially challenged as a result of the attack in 1993. In 2000 I took an active interest in equality, diversity and human rights. I spent time with members of minority and excluded members of society and developed a broader understanding of the issues and challenges experienced by many sections of society. Within the police service I developed a greater awareness and sensitivity to the experiences of dyslexic student police officers through my weekly drop-in centre and staff awareness sessions. My awareness and empathy was increased, not only through providing coaching and support but also through my own unexpected diagnosis of dyslexia, several years after the establishment of the drop-in centre. In a number of situations the dyslexic students would contact me for support whilst outside of the training environment. Many reported a lack of dyslexia awareness, bullying and in a few cases, being forced to resign from the police service.

At the time of commencing this research I was a police sergeant. I retired from the police service to take up an academic post in 2006 but I was a police officer for twenty eight years, I have been immersed in, and a part of, the culture of policing and I have completed almost all of the tasks and activities that modern police officers are required to do. I share their cultural and sub-cultural language and I have experienced discrimination and oppression within the police service. In essence, my personal and professional identity has been

shaped by my experience, and most significantly, by the effect of the assault and subsequent move into police training and development. The impact of my experience and my personal and professional values are clearly visible throughout this entire research study. My personal identity is not set aside, or partitioned, but interwoven in the fabric of this study into the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers in England in Wales.

### **3.8.1. Reflexivity in the Research Process**

Denscombe (2010: 301) suggests that the researcher is required to provide a reflexive account of the researchers 'self and its impact upon the research'. Denscombe (ibid) asserts that there is a developing expectation that the researcher should offer some autobiographical information within the analysis section of any research. This is supported by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 16). The definition offered by Bryman reflects my own interpretation of reflexivity in this study when he suggests that:

“....reflexivity entails a sensitivity to the researcher’s cultural, political and social context” as such “knowledge from a reflexive position is always a reflection of a researcher’s location in time and social space”. (Bryman 2008: 682)

The ‘sensitivity’ in the context of Bryman’s definition suggests more to me than a silent awareness of the self. I could not and will not deny that I am dyslexic nor that I spent twenty eight years as a military and civilian police officer. Throughout the research process I remained sensitised and ever vigilant to the risk that I might unduly influence the nature and product of this important study. Table 7 below provides an insight into how I reflected upon my influence and how I sought to address these potential issues. I did not only identify potential risks but also strengths and benefits too:

Examples of Potential Risks	Examples of Potential Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying my own understanding and experience of my dyslexic strength and difficulties to the participants</li> <li>• Seeking out experiences in the workplace that mirror my own</li> <li>• Only seeking examples of prejudice and discrimination</li> <li>• Ignoring cases that appeared to contradict the descriptions of the majority of the participants</li> <li>• Only selecting participants who were known to me</li> <li>• I held the rank of sergeant and in some instances I had been the participants trainer at the beginning of their careers,</li> <li>• That they would participate out of a sense of duty rather than voluntarily.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am a double 'insider' – dyslexic and a police officer</li> <li>• Understanding that text based resources including the questionnaire need to be made available in alternative formats and that they should be compatible with dyslexia friendly software,</li> <li>• I understand the language of the police officers, the use of abbreviations and codes,</li> <li>• I have an awareness of the police policies and procedures operated across England and Wales.</li> <li>• I have experience of all of the activities that the participants describe.</li> <li>• All participants were aware that I was a police officer and because we shared similar language a degree of trust and reciprocity could develop through shared story telling (Patrick 2012).</li> </ul>

Table 7: Reflexivity - Potential Risks &amp; Threats

I sought to address the potential risks by considering how this might be reduced or mitigated. An example of this process in action is drawn from the final item in Table 7 above. I was concerned that some participants might only get involved in the research process out of a sense of duty and in response for my support and work with them during the early stage of their careers. I sought to mitigate this influence by:

- Allowing years to pass between my training of the participants and contacting them to seek their participation in this study.
- By conducting the interviews once I had retired from the police service and no longer held rank within the police service.
- By using my university address and email systems to present a distance between my former role and current position
- Through detailed and lengthy telephone conversations where the informed consent process was explained and followed up in writing or accessible format.

- By following the staged process of: informed consent, which included: the research information sheet, the self-completion questionnaire process, followed by the face-to-face interviews.

At each stage all participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the study without any questions being asked as to their motivations for doing so. In order to better understand my potential influences on this study I engaged in discussions with supervisors, peers and other dyslexic professionals throughout the research process. As a dyslexic researcher this process of verbalising my thoughts, feelings and ideas was a positive means of 'checking out' my position and thought processes. This was not by way of traditional triangulation but more an opportunity for me as a dyslexic researcher to talk through my current and emerging thoughts in light of the potential risks identified in Table 7 above. I believe that I have met and exceeded the demands of Barnes and Mercer (1997: 7) who argue that any disability-related research (and by definition researcher) must be both reflexive and self-critical beyond a simple tick box exercise. In Section 3.10 below I critically reflect upon the research process.

### **3.9 Analysis – Themes & Coding**

#### **3.9.1. Introduction**

The data collection phase of this study generated a significant quantity of text in the form of: field notes, completed questionnaires and the transcriptions of the twenty five interviews. The analysis phase of the research process was both informed and underpinned by Layder's 'Adaptive Theory' (Layder 2005: 292).

#### **3.9.2. Managing the Data**

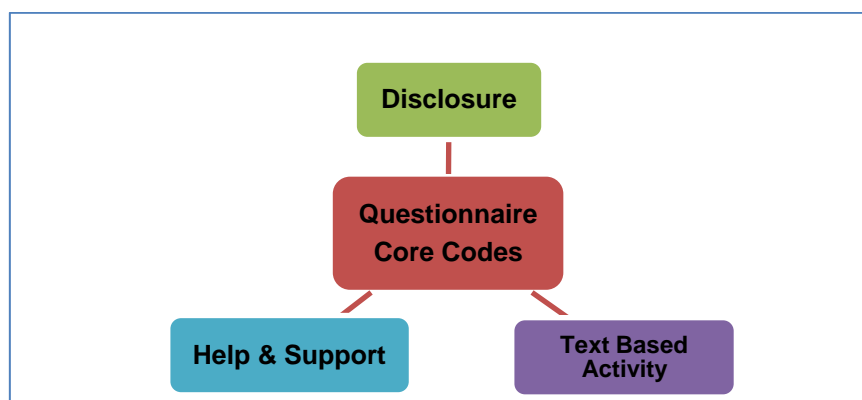
All of the data was digitised and stored using QSR International's 'Nvivo' qualitative data analysis software (QSR 2008). The text documents were all converted into MS Word documents with a standard format of Arial font size twelve with double line spacing on a cream coloured background. This allowed me to engage with the data more clearly. The



collation of the data in this format was also compatible with both Dragon Naturally Speaking voice-to-text software (Nuance 2009) as well as 'Read&Write' text-to-voice software (TextHelp 2009). Audio files, transcriptions and digitised questionnaires were stored under the pseudonym of each participant, encrypted and password protected.

### 3.9.3. Phase One: Initial Analysis of the Questionnaire Data

As recommended by Layder in his adaptive approach (2013: 130) the data from the questionnaires was analysed as soon as they were returned and had been digitised. At this point where initial coding took place the data was broken up and organised into 'meaningful' and manageable pieces for identification and later retrieval. The initial codes were informed by the literature or extant theory (2013: 130) (see Chapter Two). Layder argues that this process is important in the early stages of data analysis because it provides a scaffold upon which to proceed (Layder 2013: 131). In this first phase the codes that emerged included:



**Figure 3: Initial Coding - Questionnaires**

From the early analysis of the questionnaire data, satellite codes (Layder 2005: 54) were documented from these core codes and categories: Disclosure, Text-Based Activity, and Help & Support. Within these categories a number of sub-codes emerged. At this early phase of the analysis clear links could be established between the literature and the data from the questionnaires (Ibid: 54): for example participants in the study reported by Stanley et al (2007) suggested that drivers and inhibitors for disclosure of dyslexia to an employer

were not always made at the start of employment. This is mirrored in the work of Leather and Kirwan (2010: 157) and in the questionnaire responses of the majority of participants in this study.

### 3.9.4. Phase Two: Analysis of the Interview Data

The initial categories identified from the analysis of the questionnaire data were formative to the analysis of the interview data. The analysis of the interview data was used to both clarify and develop the concepts identified in phase one of the analysis process. The concepts proved to be fit for purpose and appropriate in the analysis of the interview data with one notable exception. A significant gap in the original codes, identified through immersion in the interview data, was the participants' understanding of dyslexia. The category of 'the dyslexic identity' was therefore added and fragments of data were ascribed to this code. The data from the questionnaires was revisited in light of this new category and linked to the literature. Figures 4, 5 and 6 below provide examples of the provisional core and satellite codes from the interview data:

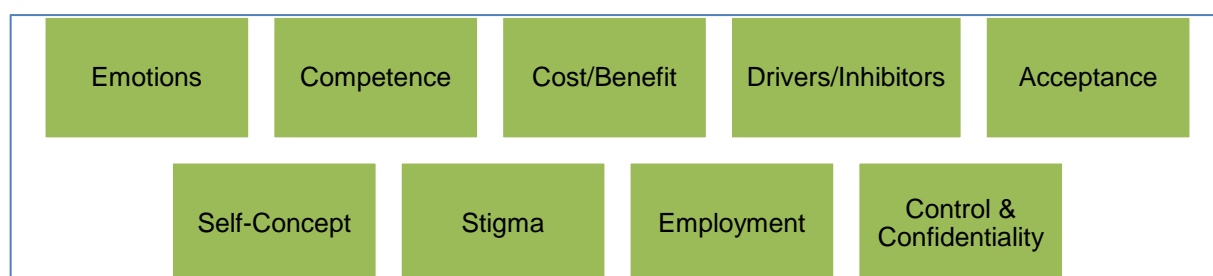


Figure 4: Disclosure Concept

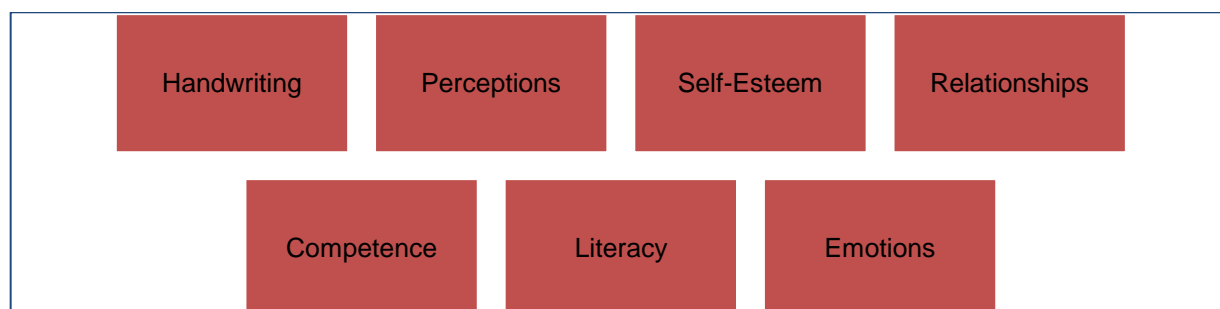


Figure 5: Text Based Activity Concept

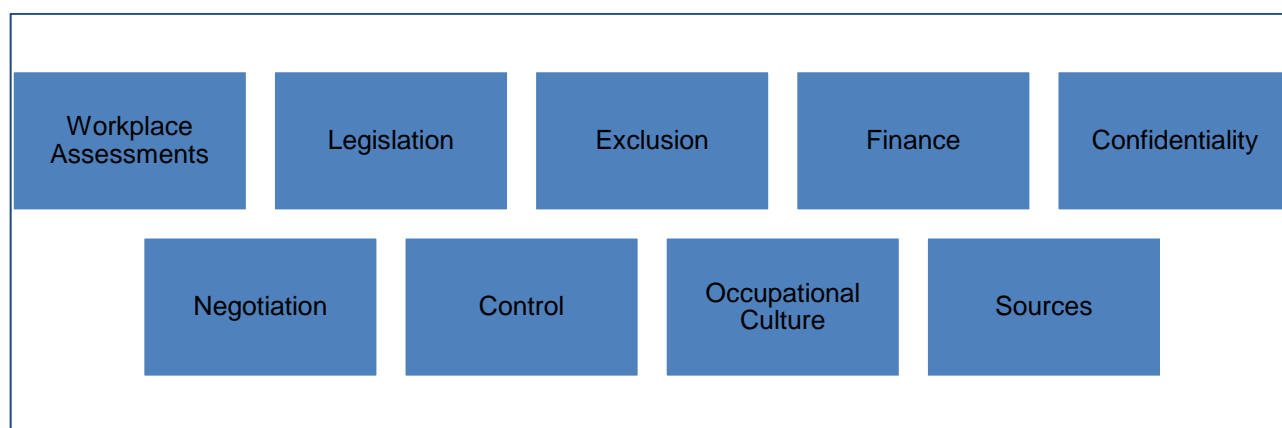


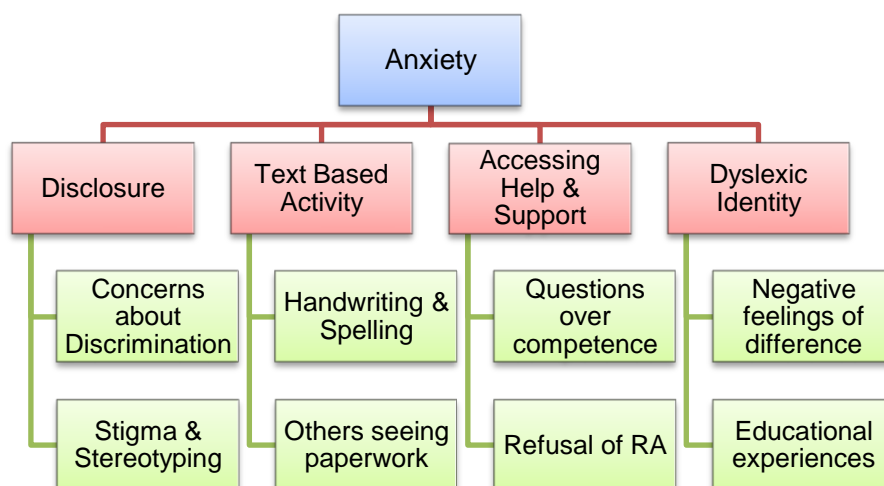
Figure 6: Help & Support Concept

### 3.9.5. Phase Three: Deeper Immersion in the Interview Data

Relationships were observed which in turn required a further review of extant theory. Links between the data and literature began to emerge. The coding of the data fragments continued until all of the interview data had been coded. Not every line or paragraph of text was labelled and not every fragment of data was allocated a code where it did not naturally fit. The application of this often thought provoking and thorough, almost forensic, process allowed what Layder (2005: 55) describes as the dialogue between extant theory and emerging data to occur. This process continued until *saturation* had been reached and the data was not revealing anything new (Layder 2013: 126).

### 3.9.6. Phase Four: The Core Concepts

Four final concepts were eventually confirmed: The Dyslexic Identity; Disclosure; Routine Police Activity and Accessing Support. The codes and categories within each of these concepts were initially considered in isolation but patterns emerged very quickly which suggested direct relationships between the concepts. An example of a category which bridges the four concepts is Anxiety. Figure 7 below provides an insight as to how the category of anxiety bridges, to use Layder's terminology, core concepts (Layder 2005: 92).



**Figure 7: The Code of Anxiety within Core Concepts**

Through the use of Inspiration Mind-Mapping Software I was able to build concept maps and make links in a visual format. The connections were made using extracts of text which were colour coded. By superimposing the themes and concepts onto Layder's 'domains' strong patterns emerged in terms of activity across both agency and structure. For example the bullying and discriminatory behaviours of some police staff were recognised as being motivated and situated, not just in the personal context, but also in a broader context of police occupational culture and a medicalised understanding of difference in wider society. Clarity was achieved through not only the frequency of response but also in terms of strength of feelings expressed and experiences described. This bridging activity enabled the relationships between behaviours and structural aspects of social reality to be illuminated. The interconnectivity of the domains and their influence upon each other crystallised and could be seen both in the data and visually in terms of the mind-mapping process. These were tested through the consideration of alternative possibilities but alternative explanations proved inappropriate.

### 3.9.7. Phase Five: Concept Elaboration

As a result of the entire process of analysis it became clear that one specific concept appeared to exert significant influence across all four of the domains of social reality (Layder 2005) and through all of the core concepts (Layder 2005). Discrimination emerged as the most influential and significant topic across all of the concepts. Examples of the discrimination identified by the participants include:

- The dyslexic Identity – through exclusion from educational activity
- Disclosure – through negative responses from individuals and employer
- Routine Policing Activity – through the requirement to handwrite statements
- Accessing Help & Support – through the refusal to facilitate changes

At this stage a concept map was refined using the mind-mapping software in order to show bridges and relationships across domains. This process is described by Layder (2013: 156) as 'theory elaboration'. An example of the outcome of this process appears as Figure 8 below:

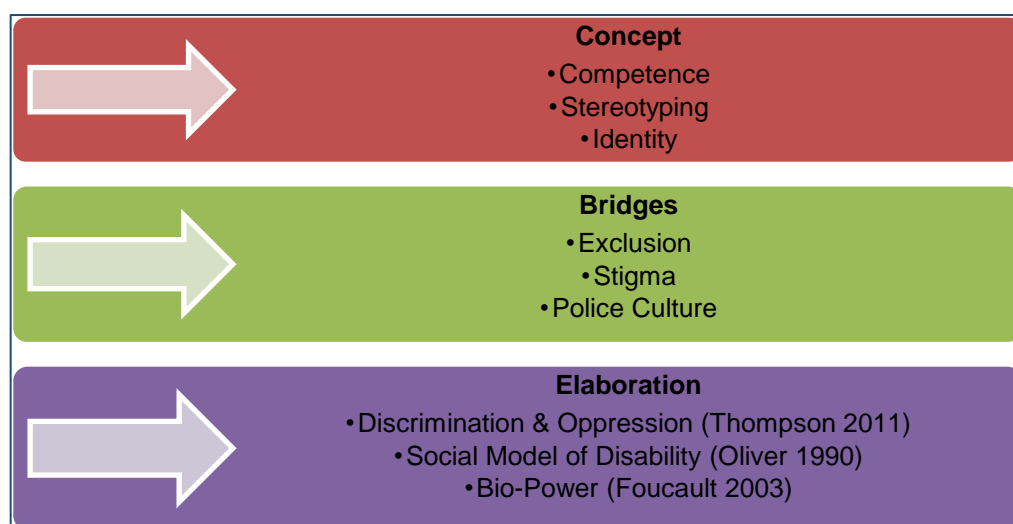


Figure 8: Elaboration and the Concept of Discrimination

The process of elaboration suggested that the unfair treatment and fear of discrimination by the participants were both experienced and expected. The emergence of disability-related

discrimination against dyslexic police officers required the subsuming or replacement of some early orientation concepts. As Layder suggests:

“A combination of elements [elaboration and emergence] represents the most productive and sophisticated outcome for adaptive research since both elaboration and emergence are interweaved within the same project” (Layder 2013: 156)

The chapters below are directly drawn from the core themes identified in the analysis.

Discrimination does not appear as a discrete chapter but rather is considered throughout Chapter Four; The Dyslexic Identity, Chapter Five; Disclosure, and Chapter Six Dyslexia in the Operational Role.

### **3.10 Reflections on Process**

My personal reflections upon the whole study are included in Chapter Eight below. The focus of this section is my reflections with regards to the data collection and analysis phases of the study. I felt a strong sense of duty and responsibility to the participants in this study. I was aware that this would be the first time that their voices might be heard and I was determined to capture and report, with authenticity and clarity, their experiences and perceptions of being dyslexic police officers. I remain genuinely interested in hearing and reporting their experiences. I described myself in Table 7 above as a ‘double-insider’ in that I am both dyslexic and a police officer (now retired) and therefore this identity afforded me unfettered access to the participants in this study. Whilst Barnes and Mercer (1997: 7) amongst others involved in the disability-related research argue that insider research is both desirable and necessary to fully appreciate the experiences of the researched group others are more cautious (see Goodley 2011: 25).

I was acutely aware that my double insider status could allow me access to both personal and practical issues within their personal and professional lives that might now have been seen or become accessible to others (Humphries 2000). On this basis I ensured that all of

my communication by post or email including the self-completion questionnaire did not contain any sensitive or potentially damaging information. It was only during the face-to-face interviews that detailed and sensitive questions were sometimes asked so that I retained possession and control of such information.

Having reflected upon the development and use of the questionnaires, I believe that they were not only fit-for-purpose but also delivered the data that I had hoped and expected. The piloting of the questionnaire was a significantly positive experience at the start of this study. It was an opportunity to both apply and demonstrate my commitment to the principles of participatory research methods.

The interview guide, in its final version, resulted in a significant quantity of highly relevant data and I consider it also to have been fit-for-purpose. There were however two aspects of the interviewing process that could have been improved upon; the timings of the interviews and the duration of the interviews. Due to my teaching duties and associated responsibilities, the time available to conduct the interviews was sometimes limited. As a result I made the decision to conduct up to three interviews in one day. Despite being a highly experienced interviewer I found that my levels of concentration were significantly reduced during some of the longer interviews and always during the second and third interviews. The process of listening and making notes and asking questions resulted in my loss of focus on a small number of occasions. Several interviews exceeded ninety minutes and on reflection I could have introduced a short comfort break for the benefit of both the participant and interviewer. I was mentally exhausted after all of the interviews and sometimes found it difficult to make field notes. In future I will audio record these notes.

The most critical and potentially terminal challenge to the data collection and analysis phase of this study came when I was required to transcribe all of the interviews. As I have indicated above, I am an experienced interviewer and have significant experience of

transcribing police interviews. Despite this I suffered bouts of debilitating anxiety and frustration when I attempted to transcribe the first interview. Nvivo software at that time was not compatible with a foot pedal that could allow both hands to remain free to type which meant that one hour of audio required between ten and twelve hours of transcription. Additionally, due to my work commitments I was required to complete the transcription outside of the working day and at weekends. I found this process mentally exhausting and it was the only point in this study that I considered ending the study. I spent over six months attempting to transcribe the audio. I tried a wide variety of dyslexia-friendly software but none made any difference. Eventually I secured funding for the transcription to be completed by a professional audio-typist through the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) Process described in Chapter Two above. I checked every single transcription against the audio files and made amendments where necessary. This was the period where being a dyslexic researcher created the greatest challenge and I lost one year of this study to this issue. In future studies I will try to ensure that the costs of professional transcription are included in any bid or financial agreement.

At the beginning of this study I intended to use Nvivo 8 qualitative data analysis software. In practice I only used this software to hold and initially code the data from the questionnaires and the interviews. The difficulties with the transcriptions and problems with the software 'dropping-out' resulted in a lack of confidence in its use and I therefore resorted to using Inspiration 7.5 mind-mapping software and Microsoft Word Processing applications. Now that many of the glitches described earlier have allegedly been resolved, I may consider a future attempt to use Nvivo software. Unfortunately it proved ineffectual in this study despite attending extensive training events. Nevertheless, I am satisfied that the data collection and analysis processes that were applied in this study were both appropriate and effective notwithstanding the difficulties and limitations discussed earlier in this section.



Before summarising this section of the thesis it is appropriate and necessary to restate the questions that this study seeks to address through the analysis described in the section above. The aim of this study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers in England and Wales. The specific questions addressed in this thesis are:

- How do dyslexic police officers understand the nature of dyslexia and its relationship with the concept of disability?
- What motivates dyslexic police officers to disclose dyslexia; what are the experiences and consequences of disclosure?
- How are processes and products of workplace support (including Reasonable Adjustments) accessed by dyslexic police officers?

### **Summary of Chapter Three:**

In this chapter I have set out the research method, methodology and strategy that were developed for and applied to this study. I have discussed in particular detail how this is an exploratory, qualitative enquiry which is informed and underpinned by two specific principles; firstly, the Social Model of Disability and secondly, Active Participation. I have described and argued how the principles of Layder's (2005) Adaptive Theory informed and shaped this study. In this chapter I set out how a purposive approach to sampling was adopted. I further identified how the data was collected through the development, piloting and use of self-completion questionnaires and by way of face-to-face semi-structured interviews. I have set out my position with regards to knowledge and what constitutes knowledge against a backdrop of Domain Theory.

I have described how the data was digitised and then coded using the principles of Layder's Adaptive Theory, and I have explained that three core concepts emerged from the analysis, which were directly linked to the questions at the heart of this study, and provide the headings for the three chapter below.

## **Chapter Four: Introduction to Core Concepts**

The analysis section of this thesis is divided into three chapters. The three chapter headings are drawn directly from the research questions of this study. In Chapter Four the participants define their personal understanding of dyslexia, their strengths and areas of difficulty. This chapter seeks to address the first research question of this thesis: 'How do dyslexic police officers understand the nature of dyslexia and its relationship with the concept of disability?' The chapter develops this theme by exploring the participants' understanding of dyslexia as a disability. It concludes with an exploration of the participants' understanding and awareness of the models of disability which underpin United Kingdom equality legislation. Chapter Five is an examination of the participants' motivations and experience of disclosure or 'coming-out' as dyslexic in the police service. It is in this chapter that the second research question is addressed: 'What motivates dyslexic police officers to disclose dyslexia; what are the experiences and consequences of disclosure?' The chapter then develops the decision to disclose by examining the associated labels, stereotypes and stigma. The focus of Chapter Six is an exploration of needs assessments and reasonable adjustments, and also of the participants' experienced challenges of operational policing activities as dyslexic police officers. The third research question of this study is addressed in this final chapter: 'What are the operational challenges for dyslexic police officers; how are processes and products of workplace support accessed by dyslexic police officers?'

### **4.1 Chapter Four: What is Dyslexia?**

The key themes of this first chapter are the participants' understanding and constructs of dyslexia and disability. The themes are drawn directly from the first research question of this thesis: 'How do dyslexic police officers understand the nature of dyslexia and its relationship with the concept of disability?' The chapter examines how the participants describe dyslexia and whether or not they recognise it as a disability. The chapter continues with an examination of the connections between dyslexia and disability. The thoughts and

feelings of the participants are considered through the lens of Layder's first domain, psychobiography (Layder 2013: 44). The chapter concludes with an exploration of the dyslexia-related equality legislation of the United Kingdom and the rulings of Employment Tribunal cases involving dyslexic police officers from across England and Wales.

## 4.2 The Language of Dyslexia – 'Being Dyslexic'.

"I understand it to be a form of a learning disability and the way I sort of understand it is that your brain works slightly differently to what would be, how maybe a normal person learns. Erm and a lot of the problems are associated sometimes with short term memory, with ordering or by the letters or numbers. Erm often confusion with different things like left and right and concentration spans sometimes come into it as well". **(Emma)**

What Emma offers is an interesting personal description of dyslexia. The difficulties outlined by Emma mirror the terminology and characteristics found in definitions of dyslexia in adults by authors including McLoughlin, Leather and Stringer (2002: 4), Fitzgibbon and O'Connor (2002: 3) and Reid and Kirk (2001: 3). The key characteristics represent her understanding of dyslexia; what is significant in her definition is the sentence "Your brain works slightly differently to what would be; how maybe a **normal person** learns" (emphasis added). What Emma is suggesting is that to be dyslexic is to be abnormal with regard to learning. The language and terminology used by the participants to define dyslexia sometimes offer an interesting insight into their identity or sense of self-perception. Terry describes dyslexia thus:

"For me I believe it is a delay and some sort of complication or breakdown in the communication between my eyes and my brain. Which I think has caused me, throughout my life, to accept that I find things difficult so therefore unless it was imperative that I did something or remembered something I would just not bother"  
**(Terry)**

The definitions presented by Emma and Terry suggest that dyslexia equates to a negative difference. Marcia and Ann support the terminology used by Emma and Terry when they suggest that dyslexia is:

“An inability to process information the same as other people” **(Marcia)**

“A missing link or like a jumbled up brain. Erm.... I can’t explain it” **(Ann)**

Steve describes dyslexia in terms of brain speed and specifically he suggests that his brain is working slower than the brain of a non-dyslexic. It would be interesting to understand the basis for this assertion; however Steve was unable to say more on this issue:

“I think it’s really the way in which the speed of your brain may work. So for me it’s slightly slower than somebody who hasn’t got dyslexia” **(Steve)**

The terminology used by the participants thus far is rooted in the language of the medical (deficit) model of disability (Cooper 2009: 65); they have described it in terms of difficulties and deficits. This language is more usually found in definitions espoused by psychologists and others from the positivist tradition (Morton, 2004; Nicolson & Fawcett, 1994; Olson, 2002; Snowling, 2000; Stein & Talcott, 1999). The participants’ use of language may have been influenced by the terminology of the form of dyslexia report required in education and employment. It is also rooted in the medicalization of disability and dyslexia suggested by Tremain (2005). Nearly all of the participants in this study were assessed by psychologists. Almost all provided copies of their assessment reports to me at the start of the research. Without exception the assessment reports relied heavily on the discourse of the medical model. A majority of the cohort expressed confusion and a lack of understanding of the language used in the reports. This is not an uncommon experience and it is not limited to dyslexic police officers (Fitzgibbon and O’Connor 2002; Pollak 2005).

Fitzgibbon and O'Connor (2002: 140) argue that many of the personal difficulties experienced by dyslexic adults are linked to the stigma associated with dyslexia. The basis for much of this stigma is the labelling of dyslexics as slow readers or learning disabled, as well as the medicalization of the discourse of dyslexia and disability. Not one of the participants reported any police practice or role-based interpretation in the assessment, beyond the generic academic recommendations of extra time in written work. The assessment reports of the cohort frequently included levels of dyslexia or specific learning difficulty. All but one of the assessment reports identified the participant as being 'mildly' dyslexic, whilst one identified the assessed individual as 'moderately' dyslexic.

The reports of those participants who were employed as police officers at the time of the assessment failed to personalise the findings to the role and duties of the police officer. Fitzgibbon & O'Connor (2002: 141) are critical of this approach, as it fails to assist the dyslexic adult (and in the context of this study, police officer) with the opportunity to find their own way of "describing and defining dyslexia". The consequences and implications of this approach to assessment and the language used within reports are considered more fully in the next chapter of this thesis. Many of the participants described dyslexia using words which resonate with the medical-based language of the assessment reports. What is also note-worthy here is that the participants are describing their understanding and experience of being dyslexic in terms of the descriptive characteristics of dyslexia defined by McLoughlin et al (2002: 5):

"I see it as a difficulty of understanding words, I'd say it's a difficulty of comprehension of words and structure and spelling" **(Dale)**

"It's different things to different people; so for me it's just forms, short term memory is atrocious, I am fine with maps" **(Todd)**

Table 8 shows how participants adopted medical model descriptions of dyslexia (Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002: 144):

"I can spell a word, a simple word ten, write it ten times but on the tenth time it would be like a word blindness to me and I won't be able to, just can't think how to write it" <b>(Sean)</b>	"Not being able to, this is too simple, not being able to function as you should function, but you think you are functioning right when everybody else says no that's wrong, but you can't see it because you know to you that's right" <b>(Todd)</b>	"Sometimes the brain goes faster than the eyes. So you'd be reading something that wasn't there or you'd be putting words in because it's what you think it says" <b>(Eddie)</b>
"it's that your brain works slightly different, it takes, I mean one of my difficulties is my, you know, the short term memory and getting it from my short term memory into the long term memory" <b>(Adrian)</b>	"It's a difficulty with words and as someone put it to me my brain is wired up a bit differently to everybody else's and that's it" <b>(Ben)</b>	"Problem, well I say a problem, yes a problem with your spelling but it can also be, it's not just your spelling, it can be other things can't it? Like speech and, I can't even think now" <b>(Linda)</b>

Table 8: Examples of descriptions of medical-model based language

Deficits and areas of difficulty form the basis of these definitions and they fail to recognise or acknowledge the social (i.e. attitudinal and physical barriers) and situational aspects of dyslexia. Firstly the difficulties described are generic and are not operationalized or situated in any form of activity, and secondly the reported difficulties are not considered from an external or social perspective. Carl describes his understanding of dyslexia and offers an additional level of complexity:

"From my point of view it's to do with spelling and writing. I know people who have serious dyslexia write sentences in the wrong order, and I know that getting your right and left muddled up is quite common. ....And I assume it's something to do with, it must be to do with the way your brain works" **(Carl)**

Whilst Carl supports the theme of his peers regarding the areas of difficulty, he also introduces the concept that there are levels of dyslexia. We will return to this idea of levels or tiers of dyslexia shortly; but there were other responses to the question regarding the definition of dyslexia which produced interesting and thoughtful responses from the cohort.

“This is just me now, it’s like having a disfigurement isn’t it, there’s nothing you can do about it, and it can’t be operated on. There’s nothing I can do about this”.

**(Ann)**

Although Ann does not define dyslexia in terms of strengths or difficulties, she does offer an insight into her feelings and perception of dyslexia. Ann recognises that dyslexia is an intrinsic part of her self-identity (Cooper 2009); and she powerfully likens being dyslexic to living with a disfigurement. This can be construed in negative terms and by suggesting that it cannot be removed by a medical procedure she is perhaps suggesting that dyslexia is unwelcome, negative and abnormal. (Interestingly both dyslexia and disfigurement are included within the protected characteristics of disability in the United Kingdom Equality Act 2010). Clearly this can linked back to the arguments presented by Tremain (2005) and Foucault (2003) that the medicalization of dyslexia has manifested itself in the language of those people so labelled.

Not all officers described dyslexia in such negative terms, but for those who did, the dominant discourse of the majority of participants is that dyslexia is a *negative* difference which is caused by cognitive, biological differences or deficits. A small number of participants offered an alternative understanding of dyslexia:

“It’s a challenge but it’s a gift in some ways because I have strengths in areas better than other people would have. I see things differently which is why I can draw better than other people. I also seem to be much better communication wise than other people..... I’ve learnt to cope with it because I understand what it is and I understand the way I work I’m just different than other people” **(Rachel)**

Although Rachel does not define dyslexia explicitly, she does describe dyslexia in terms of strengths and difficulties. Interestingly Rachel also describes dyslexia as a 'gift'. The Gift of Dyslexia (Davis & Braun 2010) is both a book and a programme authored by Ronald Davis, himself dyslexic, designed to assist dyslexic learners to learn. The basis of the book and programme is both a response and a challenge to the traditional negative stigma and deficit models of dyslexia by highlighting the positive behavioural and cognitive aspects or gifts. The aim of the programme is to "help ameliorate the symptoms of dyslexia" (Davis & Braun 2010: 3). The strengths suggested include:

A greater development of intuition	Insightfulness
The ability to perceive multi-dimensionally	Ability to think in pictures
Vivid imagination	The ability to experience thought as reality
Greater curiosity	Heightened awareness of the environment

Table 9: Suggested strengths of dyslexia (Davis & Braun 2010: 3)

Although no other officer used the term 'gift' explicitly, a small number did identify with a number of the gifts or aspects espoused by Davis & Braun (2010). It is likely that those dyslexic people who describe the manifestations of dyslexia as a 'gift' are in fact reframing their experiences of dyslexia from a negative, medical understanding towards a more social, neurodiversity-based understanding of it (Cooper 2009). Paul confirms his understanding of dyslexia as a difference, rather than in wholly negative terms. When asked to define dyslexia Paul responded:

"I don't see the world quite the same way everybody else does, I have a different picture of things.....That seems to be a skill that I think is associated with dyslexia, it's the pay off if you like in not being able to spell.....it's an intuitive kind of understanding of things **(Paul)**



What Paul is describing clearly supports Cooper's (2009: 66) and Kiziewicz' (2012: 197) suggestion that dyslexic characteristics can include: making unusual connections, being particularly good at dissecting arguments, being creative and producing new ideas. Although unfamiliar with the Davis method, Paul clearly articulates both that he considers himself to be highly intuitive and that this heightened level of intuition is an aspect of dyslexia. Paul suggests that intuition is 'payback' for the difficulties with spelling specifically. The 'payback' could be interpreted as balancing out one negative for a positive, or Paul could be in tune with the thoughts of Marcia, who also identifies strengths and weaknesses associated with dyslexia:

"Because you can't process information one way you can process it another way or you can do some things and being practical is a strength. And a lot of dyslexics I have found are quite practical because they have to be because of the coping mechanisms" **(Marcia)**

And this theme is further developed by Ursula:

"To me it's a syndrome because every person has different symptoms, it affects them differently..... And it's often coordination, for me it is construction of the language as well, I find it quite difficult from what I want to say to putting it down on paper..... The fact that I am tone deaf is probably an indication that I am dyslexic. So it's the whole spectrum. It's not hearing things properly, not because you are deaf but you mishear things. And for me I often say words slightly wrong because it comes out wrong rather than I meant to say something else" **(Ursula)**

What Marcia, Ursula and Paul recognise is that dyslexia is not experienced by all people equally (Morgan and Klein 2000) (Brunswick 2012: 3). Marcia clearly understands that all people, dyslexic or not, have different strengths and areas of weakness beyond those typically associated with dyslexia. The argument that Marcia makes in her example is one which shifts the focus from the dyslexic who has specific strengths and deficits in

comparison with the non-dyslexic or typical person, and locates the differences in a broader social context.

This perspective on dyslexia resonates with the arguments of Cooper (2009: 66) when he asserts that “dyslexia is a part of natural human diversity”. We all exhibit strengths and difficulties and it is the *context* of the activity which creates the difficulty, not simply some inherent deficit located within the individual. This understanding of dyslexia is summed up in the comments of Alex and Peter, who suggest that:

“The problem is that society expects things to be done in a certain way, and you deal with things differently. But I certainly come across a lot of dyslexic people who are very good, and I can only talk about in a police role, cause that’s what I do, but who are extremely good bobbies, very competent and I think it actually brings something to the table rather than detracting from it” **(Alex)**.

“....dyslexia is....a difference of how you process information, you know. It certainly doesn’t affect how bright you are or what your abilities are, its merely how you actually process the information.....some people are better with numbers, some people are natural mathematicians, some are very artistic, some are great writers, they all have their strengths.....generally speaking, have much greater communication skills, certainly verbally, and are very quick at problem solving, sort of spatial awareness tasks. They can actually absorb complex information very quickly if it’s seen visually or given verbally” **(Peter)**

Whilst the majority of the participants described the characteristics of dyslexia in terms of negative difference and deficit, a small number - as the two examples about demonstrate - identify dyslexia as difference. Having identified two contrasting concepts of dyslexia, the focus will now shift to the participants’ understanding and perceptions of dyslexia as a disability.

### 4.3 Dyslexia as Disability

Layder (2013: 44) argues that we all see ourselves as “unique individuals with a distinctive ‘self’ or ‘personal identity’”. This identity evolves in part from our interaction and engagements with others. Each of us develops our own bank of “feelings and behavioural responses” that are unique to us all. Layder (ibid) describes this aspect of self-identity or life careers as our psychobiography. The domain of psychobiography was described in the previous section of this thesis as the base domain of Adaptive Theory. The sense of self in terms of dyslexia and the label of disability are the focus of this section of the thesis.

When asked if they considered dyslexia to be a disability, Emma and Sean specifically separated out ‘specific learning’ disability from the generic term *disability*, and Sean suggested that they are not the same thing.

“A specific learning disability but not a disability - big difference” (**Sean**)

“I understand it to be a form of a learning disability” (**Emma**)

Later in the interview Emma stated that:

“well I think it’s a disability because the things that a lot of people find easy you don’t find often as easy, being sort of dyslexic..... [Supervisor] making fun of my disability for your own amusement. And he was like, yes, I suppose I am”.

(**Emma**)

Whereas Sean separates out the terms, Emma uses them interchangeably. Dale and Ben also define dyslexia as a disability:

“I did [disclose] but because at that point I knew it was a disability” (**Dale**)

“Now people with dyslexia....a disability have got to be helped” (**Ben**)

Likewise, Matthew sets out his reasoning behind his belief that dyslexia is a disability when he suggests that:

“Yes, because it, a disability is something which hinders that person’s ability to do something. So obviously disability you think someone’s disabled they’re in a wheelchair but actually yea, being in a wheelchair hinders their ability to walk, and dyslexia hinders their ability to read and write. So I would see it as a disability”  
**(Matthew).**

Terry makes a significant observation when he suggests that dyslexia is not only a disability, but that disability and disablism can be likened to other forms of historical and contemporary discrimination and oppression:

“....an official diagnosis of dyslexia they have to disclose it. And the reason they have to is because how are we ever going to start moving on.....Let’s be honest disability in the year 2000 is what racism was in the 80s, it is what sexism was in the 70s and the 80s within the workplace. And disablism exists, the theory of disablism exists” **(Terry)**

Terry introduces and links the concepts of ‘-isms’, those forms of discrimination (and oppression) on the basis of personal and social characteristics e.g. gender, sexual orientation and race with disablism (Brown 2007, O’Neill & Holdaway, 2007). Marcia builds upon the thoughts of Terry when she suggests that:

“Disability has got a stigmatism or stigmas, that, and people, it’s like race and minorities, and people are scared to say something”. **(Marcia)**

Terry and Marcia appear to be more alive to the sense of oppression and although they do not explicitly say so, they appear to recognise disability from a social model or barriers perspective (Oliver 1990). Richard is also clear that the words dyslexia and disability carry connotations, and these are linked to societal and individual responses including labelling and stigma (Goffman 1963; Becker 1963):

“I mean I’m loath to say disability or condition because they’ve both got big labels on them” **(Richard)**

The personal risk of identifying dyslexia as a disability is highlighted by Steve:

“.... [if I admit]...I’ve got this disability, it’s almost like giving them ammunition to shoot back at you to say, actually, no you’re not good enough” **(Steve)**

What Steve is suggesting here is that some members of the police service will stigmatise his acceptance of the disability label. The imposition of the label carries the potential for Steve to be pre-judged on the basis of stereotypes within the police service and potentially experience discrimination (Barnes and Roulstone 2005: 318). The suggestion by Steve of prejudice and the application of the dyslexia stereotype is not unfounded or unusual (Fitzgibbon and O’Connor 2002). The Employment Tribunal and Employment Appeals Tribunals discussed previously in Chapter Two offer more than a little support for this fear or suspicion of discrimination in the police workplace. The risk of being labelled is that some members of the police service will apply the label and stereotype, thereby focusing on perceived negative aspects of dyslexia, rather than adopting an objective standpoint where strengths and areas of difficulty are equally considered (McLoughlin et al 2002; O’Neill and Holdaway 2007).

Many of the participants rejected the notion of dyslexia as a disability completely. A common response from the participants suggested that dyslexia was not a disability, and justification for this standpoint was frequently offered. The basis for the denial or an unwillingness to accept the label is due in part to their (mis)understanding of the term disability. In most examples disability was equated to mobility or impairment, to the exclusion of social factors or barriers (Oliver 1990; Barnes & Roulstone 2005). Typical responses from participants are included in the table below:

“No, I don’t think it’s a disability. I think it can hinder you in some ways but I think there’s ways round that. So no, I wouldn’t say it’s a disability” <b>(Richard)</b>	“Erm I wouldn’t say disabled because you always associate that with (pause) I consider myself to be dyslexic not disabled” <b>(Justin)</b>	“So I find it hard to say it’s a disability, it’s a pain in the neck to live with at times but no I have difficulty calling, I wouldn’t call it a disability” <b>(Todd)</b>
“I find it difficult to call it a disability because it’s not just what’s wrong. What’s that phrase - it’s not the disability” <b>(Paul)</b>	“It’s not a physical disability is it? It’s not like you’re walking, you know, a flight of stairs” <b>(Steve)</b>	“No because I look at someone who’s disabled who’s broken their back. – I don’t think I’m disabled” <b>(Rachel)</b>
“I don’t think it is a disability” <b>(Alex)</b>	“No I have never considered myself to be disabled no” <b>(Carl)</b>	“No, I don’t like people describing it (dyslexia) as a disability” <b>(Kevin)</b>

Table 10: Participant constructions of disability

The responses take the form of what I would describe as traditional interpretations of the meaning of disability and appear to deny or suggest an ignorance of the Social Model of Disability. This should in no way be interpreted as a criticism of these participants; on the contrary, the dominance of the medical or individual model of disability since the medicalization of difference in the early eighteenth century is so deeply ingrained in modern society that the concept of an alternative, perhaps liberating or validating understanding of disability in terms of the social model remains largely the domain of scholars and activists even in 2013 (Tremain 2005).

Many of the participants clearly define disability in terms of individual impairment or appear to accept the language of the medical model of disability (Thomas 2002: 40). There is a clear relationship here between the perceptions described and the notion of self-concept. Our self-concept is not fixed or a result of internal thoughts and feelings alone. The process of developing our personal identity is the reciprocal influence of our subjective experience and social organisations (Layder 2013: 44). It is these views and standpoints that can

further perpetuate oppression and discrimination not only in wider society but specifically within the police service (Barton & Oliver 1997; Barnes & Roulstone 2005).

Over three-quarters of the participants in this study stated that dyslexia is not a disability and that they were not disabled. Of the remaining participants, six strongly identified dyslexia as a disability. The final three participants offered an alternative or conditional perspective:

“I do because it gets me what I want, not because I feel particularly disabled....so to call it a disability feels to me like stealing somebody else’s thunder.... It’s not tetraplegia, paraplegia; it’s not quantifiable in that same way”  
**(Paul)**

“I think yes, in that the only way to get help is if it’s described as a disability.....if I want to perform at the best I can perform, then I need extra help with different things and the only way to get that is if it’s described as a disability, so yes”  
**(Adrian)**

The conditional willingness to accept dyslexia as a disability is an example of what Pollak (2009: 7) describes as one of the few advantages of labelling. The label of disability is a prerequisite for accessing resources and additional support in the police service, as it is in education and employment under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA 2005) and the Equality Act 2010 (EA 2010) (as more fully described in Chapter Two). Paul accepts the label only in so much that it allows him access to the resources that he requires through the ‘Access to Work’ scheme (DWP 2012). Paul uses Dragon Naturally Speaking (voice recognition) software to function comparably as an operational police officer; yet at the personal level he declares that he feels as though he is cheating the system, as his interpretation of disability is more related to physical limitations and not cognitive impairments. Paul is suggesting an internal conflict, a dissonance between what he believes and what he needs. This self-negativity is often identified in dyslexic and other

neuro-diverse individuals (Grant 2009: 33). Reasonable adjustment, Access to Work and assistive technology are fully discussed in the third chapter of this analysis section.

#### 4.4 Dyslexia in Equality Legislation

The majority of participants in this study who experienced disability discrimination in the police services could have sought redress through employment tribunal, had they known of the process or been motivated to do so. Ben only became aware of the possibility of seeking redress from his Police Federation representative:

“My Federation rep said “I think that you got pretty good grounds to take this to an Industrial tribunal...do you want to? And I goes 'Yea ok'. And it wasn't until we was sitting up in London talking to the solicitor that was dealing with it, she said 'Right we might actually be able to get some compensation out of this..... It wasn't until that moment then did I realise.... all I wanted to do was make [the police] look up and say 'we are sorry we are not going to allow this to happen to any other officer with dyslexia” **(Ben)**

Ben describes his decision to complain about his treatment as being motivated by a desire to prevent any future police officer experiencing similar discrimination, not by financial compensation. Peter did consider taking his employer to employment tribunal but decided not to pursue the matter:

“Because it would then be unfair on a lot, it would bring the entire force into disrepute and it isn't the entire force, it is individuals. Erm and again I don't want to damage the reputation because the majority of people that work for [the police force] actually work very hard and do a very good job and I don't see why they should be tarred with the brush if you like. The downside is unless you tar them nothing gets done” **(Peter)**.

Despite a catalogue of bullying, discrimination and humiliation at the hands of the police tutors at the Professional Development Unit (PDU), Peter refused to seek formal redress at tribunal. Peter also recognised that an alternative method of raising awareness of the



discrimination that he experienced could have been exposed by informing the Chief Officer of the police, or by going public:

“[Individuals within the police service] have let themselves down massively and opened themselves up potentially to an awful lot of trouble, the BBC and journalists always itching for these wonderful little gambits. I considered writing an absolutely hideous letter to the chief constable and certain officers and yes even going to the press and bring it to the forefront because it’s disgusting” (**Peter**).

What Peter is suggesting is that it was individuals within the police service who discriminated against and bullied him. The individuals were in most cases the same rank as he; nonetheless those individuals were in positions of authority. Eddie reported a similar experience, but unlike Peter, Eddie had worked for the police service previously and felt a little more prepared for the bullying:

“I didn’t want to make a noise because at the end of the day I was the last one in the door and, you know, if you don’t know the organisation people don’t want to rock the boat. Well fortunately I have got a bit of experience of this organisation and I know how it works. I know if they wanted to get rid of me, they’d have to produce the evidence. Anne Smith has already said to me, we were gathering evidence to get rid of me.... we were looking at evidence to get rid of you” (**Eddie**)

The PDU staff had the authority to set practice action plans, prescribe working practices and write performance reports. The PDU staff could also recommend dismissal by producing a portfolio of evidence to senior police officers. Whilst Peter is clear that the perpetrators in his particular case are a small number of individuals, he fails to recognise the cultural dimension of the discriminatory behaviour (Thompson 2011: 42). The behaviours of the individual officers should not be considered as being just a ‘few bad apples’ but more a reflection of the culture or accepted response to difference within the PDU and wider police service.

What Peter did not know is that I had interviewed other dyslexic police officers who had experienced similar treatment by the same Professional Development Unit staff. Peter did complain to HR and Occupational Health managers; they suggested they were unable to challenge the behaviours and decisions of the police constables in the PDU. This is despite holding civilian supervisory or management positions. The power relations are unequal where police constables, the lowest rank of officer, hold a dominant position over non-police staff and managers. The themes of power and police culture are further discussed in the following two chapters of this section.

If the behaviours of non-dyslexic staff at the PDU towards dyslexic police recruits is considered against the backdrop of Allport's Scale of Prejudice and Discrimination then one could reasonably deduce that dyslexic police officers were being forced to leave the Police Area or Police Service. This behaviour appears driven and perpetuated by prejudice. The removal of dyslexic police officers is an example of what Allport describes as the 'Extermination' as an act of discrimination which is rooted in prejudice<sup>2</sup> (Allport 1954). When this behaviour is considered through the lens of Thompson's PCS analysis, it is easy to recognise the interplay between the cultural and personal levels of discrimination experienced by the participants, at the hands of the PDU staff (Thompson 2011: 115).

The four ET and EAT cases of Paterson, Brooking, Haynes and Johnston discussed in Chapter Two above were all successful at tribunal. All four received publicity in the news media and also in Human Resources journals and magazines (Rice, 2007; Paton 2008; Simpson 2009). Although these four cases have reached tribunal, a number of others were settled by the police service after a tribunal hearing had been arranged but before the

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<sup>2</sup> Allport (1954) in his seminal work on the manifestations of prejudice and discrimination, developed a model to understand how these things can evolve. The five stages are 'antilocution' (to bad mouth or name call), 'avoidance', 'discrimination', 'physical attack' and finally 'extermination'. The term extermination should be understood, not necessarily as the killing of a person, but rather in terms of eviction or exclusion. It is this later interpretation this is implied in this study.

hearing could take place. An example is Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) Martin Whitehouse of Devon and Cornwall police, who in 2008 alleged disability discrimination relating to dyslexia and a failure of the employer to make reasonable adjustments. The case was settled after the tribunal advised the employer that they would be found guilty of disability discrimination in this case should it go to full hearing. PCSO Whitehouse received compensation from his employer (Whitehouse v Devon and Cornwall Police 2008).

The majority of the participants in this study were aware of at least one of the employment tribunal cases. Sean specifically made reference to the case of Owen Brooking several times in his interview. From my own experience as a police sergeant involved in the training of police recruits, and also responsible for staff development at a regional police training centre, I was well aware of the extension of the equality legislation and the implications for the police service between 2003 and 2006. The five cases described in this section are examples of the police service response to dyslexic police officers' requests for support and reasonable adjustment to which they are lawfully entitled under the DDA(A)R 2003 and the DDA 2005. All five officers specifically informed their employer that they are dyslexic, and yet they were found by the employment tribunal to have been the victims of disability-related discrimination.

The five cases all come from different regions of England and Wales; this was not a local issue but more an issue of culture and structure within the police service. One or more of the participants in this study have successfully taken their police employer to employment tribunal with a claim of disability discrimination. The disclosure of dyslexia to employers by dyslexic police officers and the process of making the private and personal public is the focus of the next chapter of this analysis section.

## Summary of Chapter Four

The participants in this study have set out their understanding of dyslexia and in the main used descriptive terms. The descriptions offered by the participants mirrored to a great degree the characteristics of dyslexia identified by McLoughlin et al (2002) as well as Fitzgibbon & O'Connor (2002). The majority of the participants described dyslexia in terms of negative difference and deficit. A small number identified dyslexia in terms of a natural variation in the population, as a combination of strengths and weaknesses (Cooper 2009). Interestingly whilst participants all described cognitive or behavioural differences, not a single participant introduced or commented upon the emotional or affective aspects or characteristics of dyslexia. Dyslexia was not considered to be a disability by the majority of participants.

In the main those who responded in this way identified disability in terms of physical or visible impairments (Oliver 1990). A small number acknowledged dyslexia as a disability, whilst a third smaller group only accepted dyslexia as a disability in order to access support. With very few exceptions the participants in this study were not aware of alternative models of disability, nor were they aware that dyslexia is recognised as a disability within the scope of disability-related anti-discrimination legislation of the United Kingdom. The implications of these findings inform and are further developed in the Disclosure chapter that follows.

## Chapter Five – Disclosure: From Private to Public.

### 5.1 Disclosure as Process and Action

“Self-Advocacy starts with the process of disclosure. Accessing adjustments or accommodations inevitably requires that individuals tell employers that they are dyslexic”. (McLoughlin & Leather 2009: 287)

As was set out in Chapter Two, there is no statutory requirement for any student or employee to disclose any disability to anyone in the United Kingdom. Disclosure could naively therefore be described as personal choice, but in reality it is a complex process (Morris & Turnbull 2007). The motivations for disclosure, staged disclosure and non-disclosure are initially considered in this section. The experience of disclosure is then examined by considering disclosure to the employer, supervisors and peers and finally the public. The emotional aspects of disclosure are also considered against the background of police ‘canteen’ culture. This chapter blends with and builds upon the psycho-biographical by including the social interactional (domain of situated activity), together with the influences on the domain of social setting (Layder 2013: 45) of the participants. The chapter concludes with an examination of the responses to disclosure, and perceived effects of such disclosure on the officer.

Dyslexia was disclosed by a number of officers in this study prior to joining the police service, both in the application and recruitment phases:

“[arrived for recruit assessment centre]..... As the woman said 'I'm sorry ..... you've failed'. I turned round and said what about my dyslexia? And the look of horror on that woman's face was amazing, she went, 'what dyslexia?' I went well with my application form I put my assessment form..... So I went away, came back 3 months later, and funny old thing there is me and another lad, funny old thing I passed after having this extra time. **(Ben)**

“I wasn’t given extra time (at the assessment centre), I was put in with other people, and I’d told them, I had actually told them and they didn’t help me whatsoever, absolutely” **(Rachel)**

Despite their disclosure at the earliest opportunity, Ben and Rachel were denied reasonable adjustment at the regional assessment centre through a failure to respond appropriately to their disclosure in accordance with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. It is clear from these two participants that the argument of Sumner (2009: 74) that early disclosure will enable reasonable adjustments to be put in place has not been realised. Both the employer and the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA 2009), who have developed and facilitate the assessment centres, had failed to anticipate or react appropriately to the disclosure.

This is despite the NPIA Examinations and Assessment unit having responsibility for advising on issues of reasonable adjustments across the police service of England and Wales (NPIA 2009). The practical effect of this failure on Ben was that he lost out on three months’ potential earnings as a police constable. The emotional effect of the failure to respond positively to his disclosure will be discussed later in this chapter. These are examples of disability discrimination through a failure of processes and responsibility by the employer (DDA 2005). Having eventually been successful at the assessment centre, the discriminatory behaviour continued once they arrived for training. The lessons had clearly not been learnt:

“I thought if I let them know they can get their wheels in motion to say right we are gonna get this lad coming in, we’ll get this, this and this in place or we will find out ourselves. Or send this assessment off so we can then know what it means to us. And it was a complete gob smacker; they didn’t even acknowledge that it was there until the first day that I was there...what about it....what dyslexia?” **(Ben)**

Ben expected his employer to respond positively to his disclosure. The disclosure was made in order to allow the employer to put in place reasonable adjustments. A similar experience was shared by Eddie, who disclosed at the application phase of the police recruitment process to a different police service:

“They must have had it six months before I joined. I thought, game on, I made a couple of phone calls, having worked in recruitment, I went in and seen the guys and said, how’s things looking? Everything will be all right. Day one turns up, what’s happening with my dyslexia? Are you dyslexic? I didn’t know that. Right hand hasn’t spoken to left hand” **(Eddie)**

Despite their early disclosure, neither Human Resources department followed this up by arranging for role-specific work-related assessments, or by putting in place specific support in preparation and anticipation of the officers’ arrival. (The organisational and financial impact of this is examined later in this chapter.) Despite the strong recommendation to disclose dyslexia to the employer at the earliest opportunity (Sumner 2009; Hagan 2009; Kindersley 2010) Ben and Eddie were left feeling disappointed and angry at the apparent lack of acknowledgement and support put in place on their first day of employment. The responses of Ben and Eddie indicate strong emotions including frustration (Bartlett et al 2010: 54). Their expectations were not unreasonable and are in line with the recommendations of the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA 2005).

The lack of anticipatory action by either employer suggests a lack of understanding, or failure of process at best and even an ambivalent attitude towards dyslexia, despite the requirements of equality legislation (DDA 2005). An alternative interpretation of the failures by the police employers is that they did not consider it necessary to be anticipatory and that the disclosure of dyslexia was not a priority or relevant to the assessment or recruitment centre. It is possible that assumptions were made based upon stereotypes and labels of dyslexia, rather than upon the evidence contained within the dyslexia assessment report

(Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002: 72). This significant theme is further developed later in this and subsequent chapters.

## **5.2 Drivers, Motivations and Incentives to Disclose**

Only two principal motivations for disclosing dyslexia were described by the participants in this study: firstly, to secure changes in the workplace and secondly, to elicit support and understanding regarding their difference in performance. This second aspect included a hope for recognition that it may take the dyslexic officer longer to complete text-based activities, including statement taking. Table 11 includes examples of participant disclosures in terms of requesting changes in the workplace. Table 12 below offers illustrative responses, where the participants described the core aim of their disclosure as seeking understanding and patience from peers and supervisors whilst engaged in both the training and operational fields.



<p>“.... Police were diabolical, they were absolutely just not there at all.....but I wasn't given extra time, I was put in with other people.....I had actually told them and they didn't help me whatsoever” <b>(Rachel)</b></p>	<p>“Well it was the job that raised it from my probation time, but since then the only time I mention it is when I get put on a course, it should be on my files that I am dyslexic and I turn up and there is nothing there for me. But hey ho” <b>(Todd)</b></p>	<p>“I wanted assessments and stuff..... I asked for funding as well but was told no, there's no money, and they did nothing” <b>(Ann)</b></p>
<p>“And I went to tell my inspector I think I might need some help, I am ok driving and I am ok navigating but doing the two under pressure....I am finding quite difficult. And he just laughed and said don't worry all women can't map read, so that wasn't very helpful” <b>(Audrey)</b></p>	<p>“coming up for a year later, and I am still being judged on that disclosure last year when all I was doing was asking for help” <b>(Terry)</b></p>	<p>“I told my sergeant, who's in charge of the probationers, that I thought I'd had it, never been accessed and asked if it was possible I could get tested” <b>(Kevin)</b></p>
<p>“I sort of disclosed to them the fact that I was dyslexic and I didn't get any help from the job at all, but I had understanding” <b>(Emma)</b></p>	<p>“I spoke to my senior trainer he said that there are no time limits on exams or tests so he said that will help you on that side of it, which I did find helpful” <b>(Ben)</b></p>	<p>“they just sort of accepted that that was the issue...there was one test, the knowledge checks at the end of the week. Erm I did alright with them and it was one of them I got 20 out of 20 and he sort of smiled at me at the end of it, because I'd disclosed to him as well” <b>(Paul)</b></p>

Table 11: Typical requests for Reasonable Adjustments or Assessments

<p>“When it came to a relatively serious statement. Someone said why are you taking so long? I said well I am dyslexic. ....I said I am dyslexic and I struggle a little bit. I have just got to take some time” <b>(Marcia)</b></p>	<p>“I didn't want anything, no ...I think it was just, you know, make them aware” <b>(Matthew)</b></p>	<p>“So it is a little bit of, well actually, the reason why it takes me an hour and a half to take that statement, where it may take Jo Bloggs an hour, is because I am dyslexic” <b>(Steve)</b></p>
<p>“I suppose I was expecting a bit of support, you know, don't worry, everything will be OK. It was just like, OK fine” <b>(Linda)</b></p>	<p>“It's been, as I say I didn't have a choice not to disclose when I went to the police interview because they had it in front of them. Not that I disclosed it at that point at all but they brought it up” <b>(Ursula)</b></p>	<p>“She said its sink or swim when I said about being dyslexic, she said its sink or swim, I think you can do it but it's that type of job, get on with it” <b>(Justin)</b></p>

Table 12: Examples of help seeking and support

The motivations are separated into two tables for clarity of presentation. The two motivating factors are linked by a hope or expectation of either emotional or practical support in terms of dyslexia in the police role. They are also linked by an acknowledgment or belief that they will require support in order to function effectively as police officers. Sumner (2009) is supportive of early disclosure and suggests that it is necessary as a means of opening dialogue and to develop the understanding of peers and managers in a work environment.

What is worthy of note here is that in this study all of the participants had disclosed being dyslexic to their employing police service. This is in contrast to the studies conducted by Morris & Turnbull (2007), where 66% of the participant student nurses (sample size of 18) disclosed, and Stanley et al (2007) where 97% of trainee teachers, social workers and nurse participants disclosed (sample size of 60). In the study conducted by Martin & McLoughlin (2012: 129) only 17% of their participants from across a broad range of occupations had disclosed to their employer (sample size 44). In all of these studies disclosure did not always take place at the commencement of employment, but rather at various stages, for reasons which are frequently mirrored in this current study and which are now examined.

A small group of participants suggested that a failure to disclose might be used as evidence against them by others within the police service, despite their understanding that there is no legal requirement to disclose (see Chapter Two). Disclosure was not only a means of requesting reasonable adjustments, but also a matter of self-protection and insulation from disciplinary action:

“Because if you don’t [disclose] this job is very quick to say, well you didn’t tell us that.....If you like you build a rod for your own back because what they will do is they’ll very quickly jump up and down and say, well, not our fault, nothing to do with us, you didn’t tell us. So at least if the ball’s in their court, whether they choose to play with it or not is their choice” **(Eddie)**

“Yes, so what I’m trying to say is, I felt that because I’d been diagnosed and I had a report about this disability, it would be my almost duty to disclose it to the force to say, I’ve got a disability, I’m letting you know, if I make any errors, I’ve told you about it, you’re aware about it, if I do anything wrong and, although there’s going to be come back on me, I’ve told you” **(Adrian)**

Eddie and Adrian believed that if they did not disclose dyslexia, then their employers would use this against them, as opposed to thinking that their employer would inquire into the motivations for non-disclosure. Eddie bases his decision to disclose upon his knowledge and perceptions of the experience of non-disclosure by peer dyslexic officers. Having disclosed to his employer, Eddie presents frustration at their response:

“So they are aware that you’re dyslexic and then they do naff all about it and it just seems that we have people involved that are not suitable and the job are too frightened to do anything about them because, you know, we don’t want to hurt anybody or we mustn’t upset anybody” **(Eddie)**

The motivation, drivers and decision to disclose more frequently came after the officer experienced specific difficulty in the workplace (Morgan & Klein 2000):

“It was used as the last resort of thing as a *get out of jail card*, a trump, I pulled it out as an Ace in the pack, as a trump card. And knowing the little bit I knew about the DDA had come in, in the 2005 and it was now relevant, I knew they’d have to do something about it” **(Sean)**

Sean made the decision to disclose only after he was threatened with dismissal from the police service. It is noteworthy that he went on to discuss the experience of Owen Brooking from Essex Police who made headline news when he was successful at an Employment Appeal Tribunal in claiming disability discrimination against his employer (Brooking v Chief Constable of Essex Police 2007). Dale too made the decision to disclose and as with Sean, Dale describes feeling a sense of security offered by equality legislation. This sense of

protection or insulation is significant in that it suggests that without the legislation, then the officers might not have disclosed. The legislation afforded a degree of confidence:

“I think I had to.....because at that point I knew it was a disability, I knew it was safe, it makes no odds” **(Dale)**

It is interesting to note the language of Sean and Dale. Both refer to protection under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. What they are suggesting is that without the legislation they would have been vulnerable and unsafe. Their perception of vulnerability is linked to their knowledge of negative aspects of police culture in terms of oppression and discrimination towards ‘outsiders’ and those who are different (e.g. racism: Chan 1997; Holdaway and O’Neill 2007). It is worthy of note here that all police officers swear an attestation at the start of their careers, which includes an obligation to treat all people with dignity and respect, and yet police officers themselves are often victims of bullying and discrimination in terms of race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and more recently with regard to disability and specifically dyslexia (Holdaway and O’Neill 2007; Rowe 2007; Brooking v Essex Police 2008, Paterson v Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis 2007).

This should also be considered in the context of the learning requirement for the training of all police recruits discussed in Chapter Two above (Elliott et al 2003). There is a requirement for all student police officers or recruits to develop an understanding and awareness of human and social diversity, as well as professional standards and ethical conduct, and yet there is little evidence of these principles being applied in the context of this study (ibid). As was discussed in Chapter Two, discriminatory practices are not limited to police/public interactions but are also found in police/police relationships (EHRC 2011).

The lack of positive response to the disclosure at the employer/organisational level is interpreted by Eddie and Ben in negative terms. Their initial experience of the employer is perceived as unhelpful and insufficient, and this shaped their expectations of future support

and understanding (Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002). The feeling of disappointment is natural and understandable. Layder (2006: 275) argues that within domain theory every encounter, in this case disclosure, must be considered to be a 'potential threat to inner security'. The emotional effect of a lack of action or positive response to the disclosure can affect ontological security. It is important to recognise that this response is not based upon the single negative or lack of response by the employer to the disclosure; feelings of security are transient and situational.

The effect of the employer's response must be considered in context and linked to the psychobiography of the dyslexic adult discussed in the previous chapter of this study. Both Ben and Eddie describe negative experiences of disclosure prior to the recruitment process. The organisational response to disclosure shaped the expectations of future attitudes and behaviours of individuals within the police service. The disclosure to the employer in this context is faceless and distant; the disclosure takes place in written form and is processed by an administrator usually unknown to the dyslexic officer. The early disclosure by Ben and Eddie did not result in the positive benefits of disclosure suggested by Sumner (2009).

At the psycho-biographical level, the feelings of frustration and disappointment described by some of the cohort need to be considered not in isolation but rather in the context of ontological security (Layder 2013: 44). Such feelings are shaped by prior (social) experience and emotions associated with self-confidence. The encounter between the individual and the assessment centre facilitator is an interaction shaped by the prior experiences and perceptions of both actors. The participants disclosed dyslexia at the application phase of the recruitment process in the hope and expectation that reasonable adjustments would be put in place at the assessment centre. The acknowledged low self-

esteem and low confidence in successfully completing the tasks anticipated at the assessment centre added to the anxiety and concerns expressed by many of the cohort.

The encounter or social interaction with the facilitator is unequal, due to the authority of the facilitator over the participant. The facilitator decides and interprets the rules of the assessment centre and the participant is in the less powerful position of wanting to secure the job as a police officer. The unequal relations in this face-to-face, short-lived interaction can be viewed through the prism of Layder's Domain of Situated Activity (ibid: 45). The applicant is seeking to appear professional, capable and to impress the facilitator who represents the police service and is seen as the gatekeeper. None of the participants who were denied reasonable adjustments at the assessment centre made any form of complaint, despite being entitled to the adjustments under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and in accordance with NPIA policy and procedure.

“.....It's just so frustrating when you think how much effort, and the job knows that you're dyslexic from day one....” (**Eddie**)

The impact of the failure at the assessment centre was both emotional (frustration, disappointment and anger) and financial (costs of attending the regional centre for a second time, together with potential loss of not insubstantial three to six months of police salary). The experience clearly shaped some participants' expectations of the police service with regard to their response to the disclosure of dyslexia. These are clear examples of discrimination as defined by Thompson (2011) both at the personal and cultural levels as was described in Chapter Two of this thesis and which is further considered below.

Whilst the majority of officers in this study made a conscious decision to disclose once they had secured employment, a small number believed that they had no control over employer disclosure where the employer funded the assessment:

“[Disclosure] ...I had to yes because the report was sent to him. The Area paid for it so the report went to HR but I categorically said at the time, when you send this off, you send me a report at the same time.....and he did”. **(Sean)**

Control over disclosure to, and within the police service did not feature prominently within the interviews with the participants of this study. Richard suggests that his motivation for not disclosing early in his police career was due to the fear of labelling and stigma associated with dyslexia in the police service:

“I’ve found myself either not mentioning it or, not pretending that I’m not, just avoiding any kind of discussion about dyslexia because as with any condition or situation it has a label and labels can be easily used. So I find myself, not being ashamed and not being embarrassed but at the same time not wanting to say it because I don’t want to wear it out, I don’t want people to be able to just say, he’s dyslexic” **(Richard)**

Richard is clearly expressing his fear of being stigmatised and labelled by his peers or managers. The feelings and concerns expressed by Richard are not unique to him or other dyslexic officers in the police service but equally identified in the research findings of Stanley et al (2007), who examined the disclosure experiences of disabled nurses, teachers and social workers. A further consideration is that of conditional or controlled disclosure. Paul offers an example of where he is usually open and discloses his dyslexia freely, though due to the attitude and behaviour of one supervisor he made the decision not to disclose to him:

“There’s one sergeant I’ve not disclosed it to, a custody sergeant.....And every time he’s typing something in and he spells something wrong he says oh I’ve got my dyslexic fingers on.... And I want to challenge him about it .....” **(Paul)**

Two factors are relevant here: firstly power (the sergeant is one rank above Paul in the police hierarchy) and secondly Paul is concerned by the Sergeant’s possible response. The unequal power relations here are exacerbated by Paul’s fear of a negative reaction to any

disclosure (Gerber & Price 2012: 138). On this basis Paul does not disclose and allows the sergeant to continue to make negative and derogatory comments regarding dyslexia in the workplace. The responses of peers, supervisors, managers and the public to disclosure is the focus of the next section of this chapter.

Carl made the decision to disclose later in his career. The motivation for this disclosure was as a means of supporting a newer dyslexic officer who was experiencing difficulty in the police workplace:

“I think he had worked in a world where nobody had picked up on it (dyslexia). So because of that I talked to him openly and other members of the shift about the fact that I was dyslexic because I had some knowledge of it. So it’s not something I would say I have kept secret but then it’s also not something I have felt the need to tell people because it hasn’t really affected me in my working life. **(Carl)**

The decision described by Carl is the only example from this study where disclosure was made without an underpinning request for reasonable adjustment, assessment, support or personal understanding by others within the police service.

### **5.3 The Response to Disclosure – Overt Bullying and Prejudice**

The cohort without exception had disclosed being dyslexic to at least one person in the police service by the time of interview phase of the fieldwork in this study. In a similar study conducted by Stanley et al (2007) into the disclosure experiences of disabled nurses, teachers and social workers the team divided the responses into three themes: positive responses to disclosure, neutral responses and finally negative responses to disclosure. An early consideration of my own study was to follow a similar approach, as it had proved successful and appeared to be a logical structure of analysis. However, I found only one small group of experiences of disclosure that could be considered as positive, beyond a few polite words or offers of support that did not translate into any positive or supportive action. A range of responses to disclosure are considered:



“It’s been shit, for want of a better word.....one of the reasons I want out is because I’ve not been supported. There are jobs that, you know, we will support, we value our employees. No you don’t because if you did I wouldn’t be two years down the line saying, oh well you might need to be extended on your SOLAP<sup>3</sup>..... It’s just so frustrating when you think how much effort, and the job knows that you’re dyslexic from one day one because they send you to a dyslexic assessment centre with everybody else. So they are aware that you’re dyslexic and then they do naff all about it” **(Eddie)**

Eddie is both frustrated and angry that his disclosure had not resulted in the provision of practical and technical support after two years of waiting. The effect of the lack of support is expressed in his desire to leave the police service. Eddie is describing his frustration by the response of both individuals and the organisation to his disclosure. Steve made a point of disclosing to his Professional Development Unit (PDU) team. The role of the PDU is to assist trainee police officers in the transition from the training environment into the operational police role:

“I don’t think they fully understood. I felt like then they thought, this officer is never ever going to make the grade we require him to be at. And then I felt it got to a point where it was almost like nit picking and them expecting me to be a higher level than everybody else - Yes and then every time I made a mistake, they would refer back to the dyslexia as the issue and then refer to other officers who had dyslexia who’d been through the initial training and hadn’t made the grade and who had either left or were asked to leave” **(Steve)**

Although they did not know this, both Eddie and Steve attended the same PDU in the same police force within eighteen months of each other and engaged with the same three PDU staff. Dyslexic police officers are entitled to support through the ‘Access-to-Work’ Scheme managed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP 2010) (see Chapter Two for an

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<sup>3</sup> SOLAP is an acronym for the Student Officer Learning and Development Portfolio. This is a folder that all new police recruits must complete during the first two years of service. It is a collection of evidence that can be assessed to gauge competency in the role.

explanation of the scheme and application process). The financial implications for the police service in terms of the provision of equipment and training are minimal, yet neither Eddie nor Steve were made aware of the scheme by the PDU team or Human Resources staff of their police force.

Perhaps an insight into the reasons for not making the officers aware of this entitlement can be found below:

“She (PDU police constable) turned round and said, well although dyslexia comes under the DDA, to me it’s not really a disability, unlike my brother that’s got spina-bifida or whatever he’d got. And I just sort of sat there and thought, hang on, if these are the people that are supposed to help me and that’s their attitude, I’ve got no hope. - I was quite upset because she’d made it out like, because she said, you know, we’re aware that you’ve got it but you can’t hide behind it” **(Eddie)**

It is clear that the experience of Eddie or Steve could not be described other than as negative experiences and clear examples of discrimination at both the personal and cultural levels (Thompson 2011). What is troubling is that another participant, Peter, also attended the same PDU in the same police force approximately twelve months after Eddie and encountered the same PDU police constable and candidly describes his experience:

“Once I [disclosed], I get ‘*well I can’t see there’s, you know, there’s no way that you’re going to be able to do the job*’ [be a police officer].....The next day I get called into a meeting with the PDU police constable and my tutor [tutor] and um...basically, first of all, ‘you don’t have to tell us that you have dyslexia but why didn’t you?’ I said well for the very reason that was demonstrated by this officer yesterday. I told her that, you know, this was the issue and she said, you know that there is no way that you will be able to do the job. All of a sudden it was, oh no I didn’t say that, I said ‘I will do whatever I can’. I thought ‘oh no you didn’t’. But again there’s an officer with seventeen years’ experience, been in the job, knows everyone there, very good friends with the PDU team, her word against mine. I’m the officer who’s struggling so I’m obviously looking to make excuses. So ok let that one go” **(Peter)**.

The effects of this type of response are felt by the participants in a number of ways: it had a negative impact upon the participants' self-esteem and confidence and also upon their relationships both at work and at home. Both participants sought medical treatment as a consequence of their interactions with the PDU team. This is more fully explored later in this chapter.

The pressure to disclose can be intense and threatening. As is the case today, in the early years of this study I was contacted by telephone on a number of occasions by police officers and police managers seeking my advice on issues of dyslexia. One question that reoccurred was whether a dyslexic police officer who had chosen not to disclose being dyslexic when they first joined the police service could be subject to the police discipline code for an offence of dishonesty. In some cases the proceedings had already been initiated. None of the proceedings were followed through to the best of my knowledge and research. [I recognise that I should have requested that they email or write to me so that I could have used these questions in this thesis.] At the time I did not think of doing so, my concern being to ensure that those asking the question immediately halted any proceedings against the dyslexic officers and sought legal advice from a specialist employment solicitor.

Three of the participant police officers (including Peter) all know each other but at the time of the interviews none knew that the other was participating in this research study due to my strict adherence to the rules of confidentiality. The negative responses that all three officers received at the hands of just one PDU team of three police constables is nothing less than humiliating, bullying and discriminatory (Gwernan-Jones 2012: 13; Bartlett et al 2010: 154, Thompson 2011).

The hostility and resentment expressed by members of the PDU team in response to disclosure of dyslexia over a four year period suggests that there is a culture of prejudice and discrimination at the unit that cannot be dismissed as being the result of just one bad

apple (Thompson 2011). Of additional concern is the suggestion that other dyslexic police officers had failed to complete their two year probation at that PDU. Outside of this research I am aware of two dyslexic police officers who were forced to resign from that particular police force having been through that specific PDU with the same team. Attempts to locate those ex-police officers to invite them to participate in this study have been unsuccessful.

A further example of the negative and bullying culture of this PDU is described by Peter. The PDU staff asked for a copy of his dyslexia assessment and he provided one. The assessment report was not sent to an expert outside of the police force for interpretation or translation into a set of actions or adjustments that could be put in place in terms of reasonable adjustment, but was instead interpreted by one of the PDU constables. Fitzgibbon and O'Connor (2002: 76) are especially critical of such an approach and argue that any interpretation of a dyslexia assessment must be conducted by someone with expertise in the field of adult dyslexia in the workplace. Peter said:

“I provided a copy of the report to the PDU at their request, from which the PDU police constable, with her great in-depth knowledge of all things medical and psychological, decided to write in her mid-way review that I suffered from short-term memory loss. So now I have short-term amnesia, and it's just like 'oh great' .....She wrote that I have short-term memory loss” (**Peter**).

The eventual result of this action by the PDU was that Peter resigned from the police service and returned to his previous employment as a senior manager in industry. This is an extreme but not uncommon experience of participants in this study whose formal assessment report was interpreted by police constables or police staff with no reported expertise or training in the interpretation of such reports (see Moody 2009; Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002; McLoughlin et al 2002; Mackenzie 2012). Peter was refused a workplace needs assessment and reasonable adjustments.

This is clear evidence of discrimination contrary to the DDA 2005 and the Equality Act 2010 (Thompson 2011). His life-long dream of becoming a police officer was cut short through the bullying, harassment and discrimination that he experienced at the PDU. It was not just Peter's professional life that suffered at the hands of the PDU. Due to the anxiety and distress caused by his treatment, Peter describes being prescribed anti-depressant medication for the first time in his life. Peter's case because offers a powerful insight into the effect that a negative disclosure experience can have on the self-esteem and confidence (ontological security) of a dyslexic participant. This longer than average quotation is deliberately unedited:

“[Partner] was obviously very upset; the problem is when you are in that mind-set, you are not in the mind-set to fight it. So rather than, you know, try and get me to fight it, she did the right thing by saying ‘go and see the doctor’ you know, this is important. So I went and saw the doctor, he gave me some tablets but he said ‘these take about two and a half to three weeks to kick in’. So I’m thinking ‘great’ I thought well hang on, I’m off for this shift, .I had, because of the problem with my eye, the doctor said if you like I can sign you off and just say it’s to do with your eye, rather than attach the stigma of having anti-depressants on your form. OK, with the shift pattern... nearly enough time for them to kick in. I go back and its more of the same, I’m better able to cope, but at the end of the day I am thinking ‘why am I having to cope?.....I’ve done nothing wrong, I’ve done everything right, I’m working hard, I’m doing everything that I’m supposed to do and I’m getting shat upon. Not just by my immediate tutor, but by the professional support unit that’s there to help, nurture, and develop me as an officer. You know none of that” **(Peter)**

If the experiences described by Peter are considered in terms of Gordon Allport's (1954) paradigm of prejudice and discrimination, the result would be that he had been ‘exterminated’ by being forced to resign from the police service through the discriminatory practices of individuals and a culture within a particular police unit. Sean is from a different police force and yet experienced a similar response from his sergeant, having disclosed dyslexia when he experienced difficulties with police paperwork:

“Just give up, do yourself a favour and just resign.....to be honest with you, you’ll never make it as a bobby as long as you’ve got a hole in your arse. And some things like that, they stick with you and I can remember you know.....so, you know, and he’s well known for it, a bit of a bully boy and he just keeps being looked after”  
**(Sean)**

The effect of the bullying and discrimination described by Peter and Sean is sadly not unique to this cohort. Richard too describes how the negative response to his disclosure of dyslexia to the PDU resulted in depression and anxiety which had a detrimental impact upon his family and personal life:

“And this is why I am not in a position to trust them [PDU], I genuinely believe that I am in a very vulnerable situation at the moment. Because even if I left the job my situation doesn’t change, my physical and mental state. The fact that I am now 8 months into taking anti-depressants, the fact that I have been taking sleeping tablets, the fact that I have been, all these things, they don’t change. And do you know what if I lose this job they get worse because you add on top of all that anxiety and depression the fact that I can’t pay my mortgage, I can’t afford to look after my family. Now just a minute, what’s going on here, I am a victim of my own efforts”  
**(Richard)**

As with Peter and Sean, Richard did not report any history of mental ill-health or the use of any anxiety- or depression-related medication prior to disclosure to the police service. Sean, Peter and Richard explicitly state that the lack of appropriate support and guidance by the PDU staff is the principal causal factor in needing anti-depressant medication (Fitzgibbon & O’Connor 2002: 143; Bartlett 2010: 49; McLoughlin et al 2002: 6). The experiences described by Peter, Richard and Eddie are clear examples of overt bullying and discrimination in the workplace. The emotional and psychological effect of the negative response to disclosure is distressing to hear and read. Not all accounts from the cohort were as extreme; at times the oppression, discrimination and bullying is more subtle but no less damaging.

## 5.4 The Response to Disclosure – Subtle Bullying and Prejudice

Ann disclosed to her Sergeant line-manager when she began to experience difficulties in the completion of her police files and statements. The response of her manager was both negative and dismissive. Her experience was not unique:

<p>“I’d speak to him (Sgt) a few times about it, saying that I’m having problems, and he was just being, look... The impression from what I remember it was you’re just not very good.....you’re just not making any kind of effort - Lacklustre” <b>(Ann)</b></p>	<p>“HR Manager said ‘you’re going to have to go away and get yourself assessed and it’s going to cost you about £500’. And he was quite dismissive sort of thing and I was quite angry, because it was quite a big thing for me to sort of actually disclose it to someone at work” <b>(Adrian)</b></p>	<p>“.....the right word just dismissive basically..... [Tutor said] ‘just get on with it. ....its sink or swim.....I think you can do it but it’s that type of job, get on with it’ <b>(Justin)</b></p>
<p>“The only one that responded with any interest whatsoever was the sergeant, he has a vested interest because he is dyslexic himself” <b>(Terry)</b></p>	<p>“Sergeant turned round to me and said [being dyslexic] that shouldn’t affect your work” <b>(Matthew)</b></p>	<p>“You know, we’re aware that you’ve got it [dyslexia] but you can’t hide behind it” <b>(Eddie)</b></p>

Table 13: Example negative responses to disclosure of dyslexia

As with many other participants in this study, Ann and Eddie disclosed that they are dyslexic to their line managers in the hope and anticipation of support and understanding. Ann received neither, only being told that she was not very good at her job and not putting in sufficient effort. Eddie on the other hand felt as though his disclosure was dismissed. This form of subtle aggression is described frequently by the cohort. This might partly be down to a lack of understanding of dyslexia or perhaps an ignorance or arrogance on behalf of those in authority within the police service hierarchy.

It is not uncommon for dyslexic adults to be labelled as lazy or accused of not putting in sufficient effort. Fitzgibbon and O’Connor (2002: 141) describe these behaviours as “explicit

assaults on their self-concept". They note that the self-perceptions of the dyslexic adult are often determined by their experiences. This type of language and negative behaviour was identified in the Employment Tribunal of Owen Brooking, where the police service employers were found guilty of disability-related discrimination. Further examples of the victimisation (Moody 2012: 155) of participants following disclosure are now discussed.

Steve reported no less negative responses to disclosure by his tutor constables:

"I don't think they fully understood. I felt like then they thought, this officer is never ever going to make the grade we require him to be at.....I felt it got to a point where it was almost like nit picking and then expecting me to be a higher level than everybody else - Yes and then every time I made a mistake, they would refer back to the dyslexia as the issue and then refer to other officers who had dyslexia who'd been through the initial training and hadn't made the grade and who had either left or were asked to leave" **(Steve)**

A similar response was reported by Audrey, who disclosed dyslexia to her police inspector when she became nervous about an impending driving course:

"Don't be stupid all women can't map read" **(Audrey)**

Not only was the response of the inspector dismissive of Audrey's disclosure, it was also an example of a sexist stereotype described by Chan (2007). Steve and Audrey are not from the same police force. Also, the manifestations of prejudice and stigma are not restricted to the rank of police constable or Sergeant. Ursula, a senior ranking police officer, describes her feelings following her own disclosure to a senior police officer:

"Erm my vulnerability, erm admitting to your weaknesses...but also his expectation of what I should be achieving was not acceptable and yes.....I know I am not perfect but I would like to think I am professional and do a professional job. It makes you feel, me, certainly inadequate as a [manager] and whatever else that



impacts on what you do. Yes absolutely, and apart from the fact that he said there is no chance I will ever be a [more senior manager] “(Ursula)

Ursula is not the only senior police officer to experience prejudice and stigma. Chief Inspector David Paterson of the Metropolitan Police was denied reasonable adjustments by his employer when taking a police promotion examination (Chapter Two of this study includes further examples). The discrimination and oppression experienced by dyslexic officers of all ranks is not a new phenomenon in the police service. Black and minority ethnic minority officers, gay, bi-sexual and transgender officers, as well as women police officers, have all been victims of bullying, harassment, discrimination and oppression in the police service (Chan 2007; Holdaway & O'Neill, 2007; Loftus 2009). Each of these areas of discrimination and oppression has been subjected to research and academic review over the past twenty years, with the exception of disability and more specifically dyslexia prior to this current study.

## **5.5 Alternative Response to Disclosure:**

Interaction between individuals, and the effect and quality of that interaction, are further considered in the context of what Layder defines as the domain of situated activity (Layder 2006: 277). In this domain, encounters are brief and often episodic; however they can form chains of mini-episodes. The personal disclosure of dyslexia to a manager, trainer or tutors is an example of situated activity. It is important to recognise the significance of this domain in terms of meaning. Here Layder (ibid: 278) is critical of Goffman and Garfinkel, who suggest that predisposition tells us nothing about how meanings are perceived in face-to-face encounters. My data supports the assertion of Layder (ibid) who suggests that context and prior experience and feelings are highly influential and relevant in determining meaning in and from a face-to-face encounter.

The concept of stored cultural meaning is significant if the nature of situated activity is to be understood in the context of domain theory. The dyslexic officer brings to the encounter memories of both positive and negative experiences and feelings relating to dyslexia. These might include difficulty at home, in education, in previous employment and perhaps within the police service (Fitzgibbon and O'Connor 2002: 143). On this basis, meaning from any interaction must be understood in the context of subjective, external and situated influences (Layder 2006: 278).

“When I went on my response police driving course, there was a test at the end of it and you have to write some stuff down and I said look I am dyslexic. And he said we will get you the right forms and they gave me the right coloured paper, and it was the first time I ever got 100% on a test”. **(Todd)**

Todd describes a personal experience of disclosure as positive, and he suggests that his disclosure resulted in the provision of learning materials that were appropriate for him. Paul's is the only report from the officers where disclosure has resulted in long-term provision of appropriate resources:

“They still remember now [after four years]. I go to courses now and all of a sudden, somebody somewhere within our learning department knows that I'm dyslexic because I always get it on yellow paper. **(Paul)**

Emma describes her experience of disclosure as positive, though an alternative interpretation is considered below:

“My tutors had mentioned it to the sergeants as well because they were asking if there was any help that they could provide for me, we had a lady on shift at the time, and her son was dyslexic, so she was also very supportive of me..... when someone said something to me when she was around that, oh why have you spelt that wrong or done that wrong? She would turn round and say, oi, you know, and kind of stand up for me“**(Emma)**

The disclosure by Emma resulted in her supervisors asking what they could do to support her; the most significant support came from someone who had experience of dyslexia and who 'stood up' for Emma when her difficulties with spelling were raised by peers. The support of a more experienced colleague who had an awareness of dyslexia appears to be positive; nevertheless allowing another to challenge such behaviour diminished the opportunity for self-advocacy and suggests that Emma is weak and in need of protection (Fitzgibbon and O'Connor 2002).

Eddie offers a further example of what he considers to be a positive experience of disclosure:

"I said I'm dyslexic Serg and every now and again I'm going to need a bit of time. And he said to me, fine, whatever, if you need some time just let me know. He said to me, in front of the shift, which I don't have a problem with because the shift know, 'have you got anything you need to deal with that you need a bit of time?' I'd like a bit of clerical time Serg" **(Eddie)**

The response of this supervisor is both positive and pragmatic. There is a clear recognition that Eddie sometimes requires additional time to complete paperwork, and secondly the supervisor is open with the team of officers as to why extra time is being allowed. These final two examples are rare in that they are viewed by the dyslexic officers as positive. The majority of experiences and outcomes of disclosure amongst the cohort can very easily be defined as negative.

"Dear me you have got to laugh because I am not going to cry for the buggers. Erm, one person in the ... suggested that I stopped using that diagnosis as a crutch and an excuse for not doing the work.....questioned my effort, ... told me that ... felt that I was manipulating the system. And that ....didn't think that I was right for the job, and that ... didn't understand why I would be willing to do a substandard job knowing that everybody else can do it better.....to which I exploded. **(Terry)**

Despite the multiple reports of bullying, humiliation and unfair treatment one of the participants makes a strong argument for disclosure. Terry recognises that change in personal, cultural and organisational attitudes within the police service will only come from more dyslexic officers disclosing dyslexia in the workplace through self-advocacy as suggested by Fitzgibbon & O'Connor (2002: 27). He also likens the experiences of dyslexic officers to practices of discrimination and exclusion across other aspects of human and social diversity:

“They have to disclose it. And the reason they have to is because how are we ever going to start moving on. Let’s be honest disability in the year 2000 is what racism was in the 80s” **(Terry)**

The consequences of disclosure can extend far beyond the police station. The home lives and personal physical and mental health of the dyslexic police officer are also at risk. All of these incidents occurred before any work-based assessment or support strategies were put into place. One small group of participants described positive responses to disclosure. What is particularly interesting about this group is that they now all work together in a small Professional Development Unit where they are involved in the assessment and development of student police officers. Marcia, Kevin and Yvonne all state that their disclosure to their line manager received a positive and supportive response, with offers of help and support if required. These participants were by far the most relaxed regarding their work and all gave examples of mutual support in terms of spelling and literacy-based activities in their role.

## **5.6 Disclosure and the Public**

One surprising outcome of the interviews with the participants was that a small number of them disclosed being dyslexic to members of the public with whom they were interacting on police duties e.g. taking witness statements:

” [a witness] I’m just taking my time over this, I’m dyslexic. Yes, duck, yes, so am I, that’s why I took my time writing it. And it was a lot easier...” **(Paul)**

“Sometimes I do if I’m having a laugh or, you know, we’re talking about stuff and they’re writing and says I’m dyslexic, I’ll say, so am I. So yes, it’s a way of gaining the confidence of people and showing you’re human and you have got certain things, so yes I do use it to my advantage”. **(Sean)**

Both Paul and Sean describe how they sometimes disclose being dyslexic to a member of the public in response to a disclosure of dyslexia by that person. The disclosure in this context is situational and an example of reciprocity, where the officer and the witness appear to be more relaxed in the writing of the statement. This aspect of police routine activity is examined more fully in the following chapter. It is well documented that time-pressured, text-based activity can exacerbate feelings of stress and anxiety in the dyslexic adult (McLoughlin et al 2002). Todd explains that his decision to disclose or not to disclose is based upon his perception of the educational status of the person with whom he is engaging:

“Erm it depends on the person. By that I mean the more educated person they are they will be more open to it [dyslexia]. If it’s somebody, a normal everyday person we would deal with, because I can word it how they word it, and that’s easy for me to word it, it’s not an issue. **(Todd)**

What Todd is suggesting is that where he can avoid disclosure to a member of the public, then he will do so. If the member of public is able to recognise that Todd is experiencing difficulties in the writing of the statement, then he will disclose. Eddie suggests that he will disclose to all members of the public with whom he is required to record a statement:

“.... I’ve said to them [member of the public] ‘I am using this laptop because I’m a dyslexic police officer, so it’s easier for me to type’ - There’s nothing to be ashamed of. **(Eddie)**

Eddie is positive about being dyslexic, recognising that the laptop affords him the opportunity to type witness statements as a form of sensible and effective reasonable adjustment. Eddie discloses being dyslexic as a means of explaining why he is using a laptop to record the statement. In 2013 the use of laptop computers and tablet computers is so common-place, it could be argued that there is no longer any need for dyslexic officers to explain or attempt to justify the use of such devices. The provision of reasonable adjustment in terms of equipment and associated training for dyslexic police officers can only come in response to disclosure by the dyslexic police officer. The disclosure of dyslexia by the participants in this study is always associated with a request for, or at the very least, a hope for, understanding help and support in the operational role (McLoughlin et al 2002: 253).

### **Summary of Chapter Five**

The central theme of this chapter is disclosure; the making of the personal and private, public. All of the participants in this study had disclosed that they are dyslexic to their employer at the time that they were interviewed for this study. The main motivating factor was that they sought either practical support or patience and understanding in the workplace. The majority of participants reported generally negative responses to their disclosure, whilst a small but significant number experienced extremely negative responses to it. A small number reported positive and encouraging responses. This chapter has focused only upon the participants' perceptions of the disclosure processes and not on the eventual outcomes of the disclosure in all but the extreme cases.

Where disclosure had received a positive response from colleagues, peers and supervisors the participants did not comment upon any affective aspects of their disclosure. Where the participants described their disclosure experiences as negative or extremely negative the emotional and psychological effect of the experience was highlighted and more fully described as a significant factor. Peer, supervisor or manager responses to disclosure had a significant impact upon the self-esteem and confidence of the dyslexic participants in this study. In Chapter Seven, the issue of disclosure is further considered in the context of support systems and routine policing activities.

## Chapter Six – Dyslexia in the Operational Police Role

### 6.1 Introduction

The focus of this final chapter of the analysis section is dyslexia in the operational police role. It is directly related to the third research question of this thesis: What are the operational challenges for dyslexic police officers; how are processes and products of workplace support accessed by dyslexic police officers? The chapter begins with an exploration of the routine policing activities that the participants reported difficulty in completing. The chapter then moves on to consider the process and experiences of participants with regard to Reasonable Adjustment in the operational police role. This is clearly linked to the issue of disclosure that was the focus of the previous chapter. The chapter examines the use of technology in the recording of police statements as well as the attitudinal and procedural barriers experienced by many of the participants. The chapter concludes with a rare positive account of a participant's use of reasonable adjustment when completing a routine policing activity.

### 6.2 Routine Policing Activity

The quantity and burden of so called *paperwork* or bureaucracy in operational policing has been debated both within and outside of the police service for decades (Berry 2010). Police officers are required to complete a significant quantity of administration in the course of their daily duties. Modern police officers, are required to keep a paper notebook and to handwrite statements just as their predecessors did nearly two hundred years ago. This includes taking statements from witnesses, victims and suspects, recording interviews with offenders and the preparation of papers for the courts (Berry 2010). The participants in this study identified a range of routine policing activities with which they experienced difficulty, but also some where they described having an advantage over their non-dyslexic peers. In phase one of the field work participants were invited to identify operational policing activities

(not training) with which they had previously or currently experienced difficulty. Of the broad range of policing activity that the participants could have identified, all identified either two or three of the following activities:

- Statement and Report Writing
- Completing Case File for Court
- Interviewing of Suspects

### 6.3 Police Statements

In a policing and criminal justice context, a police statement is a document written by a police officer or Police Community Support Officer. It can be a record of an event from a witness, victim or other person, including the account of the police officer and is usually recorded on a specific police form (Bryant & Bryant 2013: 16). Statements from victims and witnesses are usually handwritten, yet the officer's own statement can sometimes be typed:

“The biggest area where it affects me is taking statements and that is because you have to go to a victim of an assault.....and obviously write down the whole incident before, during and after. And you also have to consider about points to prove for that offence, how they felt, were they in fear, you know, injuries and all the rest of it. And sometimes it is hard to listen to what they were saying, listen to all the bits, all the policing bits, the ADVOKA<sup>4</sup> and the injuries and the description of the suspect and all the rest of it and combine all the two together, whilst trying to write it down in a legible and comprehensive format sort of thing. So that's the bit where I struggle” (**Steve**)

Steve offers a succinct and thoughtful description of the processes involved in the recording of a witness statement. He separates out the technical content from the physical, psychological and emotional processes involved. The structure of statements can be

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<sup>4</sup> ADVOKA is a mnemonic used by police officers from across England & Wales as a means of recording identification aspects of a suspect, vehicle, location or incident. (see Bryant & Bryant 2013 for more information)



formulaic and details of the time, date, place, descriptions of people, vehicles and property are common across the majority. Police Officers are trained to use a 'Ten Point Description' code when describing people and a 'Five Point' code for describing vehicles. All issues of identification are required to follow the mnemonic ADVOKATE in witness statements (See Bryant & Bryant 2013: 201). The construction and format of statements is loosely prescribed; yet it is the process of recording the statement that is highlighted by Steve. The process described by Steve and all other participants is:

- Listen to verbal account & make notes on salient and evidential points,
- Ask questions to clarify ambiguity,
- Hand write witness statement,
- Pass to witness and ask them to read it,
- Invite witness to add alter or remove anything,
- Invite witness to sign the statement.

The initial phase of the task is to listen to the witness and to make notes of the important points. This requires a degree of concentration, listening skills, filtering out the offence and evidential detail and identifying the sequence and chronology of events.

“it’s remembering all the information, it’s getting a ten point description of a person, five point description of cars, following the IPEC model, ADVOKA, your points to prove” (**Kevin**)

Short-term and working memory plays a major part in this specific activity. Issues with concentration, sequencing and memory are frequently described in descriptive definitions of dyslexia (McLoughlin et al 2002: 5; Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002: 4). It is unsurprising that the participants without exception identify statement taking as the policing activity that creates the most difficulties (Bartlett et al 2010: 37). The most common issue raised by the participants is exemplified by the comments of Emma and Dale:

“Spelling, when it comes to, probably the most obvious is writing statements because most of them have to be handwritten. You’ve also got the added pressure that you’re writing it in front of somebody and then they’re going to read it and sign it, so that can, you can often feel a bit, well I’ve often felt a bit self-conscious writing them and then knowing that someone’s going to read it” **(Emma)**

“There’s a lot of other people that’s going to read my handwriting and that adds to the pressure of not screwing up, spelling things right. I suppose by using safe words but trying to use enough safe words to do the whole scene justice” **(Dale)**

Both Emma and Dale recognise the importance of the statement in the wider context of the criminal justice process. Both refer to the added pressure when handwriting a witness statement. Ben too uses the term pressure when recalling his first experience of taking a witness statement:

“I can remember the very first time I had to take a live statement from somebody and my god what a nightmare that was, the very first statement. My tutor sitting there, I can remember writing it out and it didn’t help that my pen, maybe I am trying to blame the pen but it was smudging everywhere ...but ...yea.. it was embarrassing....full of this pressure.....and I am thinking ‘oh sugar no’, and it wasn’t nice” **(Ben)**

## 6.4 Handwriting Statements

The majority of participants reported difficulty with spelling in statements. This is unsurprising when difficulty with spelling is a primary characteristic of dyslexia (McLoughlin et al 2002: 4; Fitzgibbon & O’Connor 2002: 5; Bartlett 2009b: 25). Most of the participants in this study described feeling embarrassed by their spelling and in some instances, their handwriting; a few offered a creative cover for the words that they could not spell:

“I would write a statement and you could see.....if I wasn’t sure on a spelling of a word, my handwriting became very scruffy to try and hide it. So that was how I would get round it. And then somebody would say, oh well what does that say? Oh

that says, you know, Michael, oh it looks like Michelle to me, no it's Michael and that was how I would get round it" (**Eddie**)

"Part of the childhood coping strategy was to sort of fudge words, if I can't spell it I'll write it so you might guess what it is but you wouldn't know that there's three letters missing in it or that there's a vowel missing in it, or that there's a syllable missing in it because I've not picked it up.....it quickly goes back into a sort of a smudge and it is difficult for people to read and difficult for people to understand" (**Paul**)

"if there is a word I don't know how to spell I write it so that, there is this thing isn't there where if you have got a word, the first and the last letter is the same but the middle is jumbled up, your brain works out what it is. So if I know the first letter, say camouflage, I know C A M and then something, something, F, G, and I know whoever is going to read that their brain is going to work out what that says.....you can't read it because it's just a kind of a squiggle. And then as long as there is the G and the F and the C A someone can work that out, not a problem" (**Marcia**)

Rather than ask the witness how to spell a word Eddie, Paul and Marcia seek to cover difficulty with spelling by smudging the word or by using the correct first and last letters and hoping that the witness would not notice the errors. Many participants described feeling embarrassed by their spelling difficulties and handwriting. Matthew reports experiencing difficulty in spelling items of property in statements following household burglaries:

"I get worried..... 'I think it's best you need to get a list and when you have a full list of everything that's gone. Oh you've had a burglary and had a large amount of items taken, then call us back when you know exactly what's gone' I feel guilty, because I know I should be, I should be doing it [writing the property list in the statement]....I do get uncomfortable though (**Matthew**)

"I kind of, not convince the witness, but you say to the witness, you know, 'we have got to have it in layman's terms' you know, someone's got to pick this up and they have got to know exactly what's going on, you know, 'do you know it was exactly beige or was it more of a sandy colour' " (**Matthew**)

Whilst Matthew seeks to make excuses for his spelling difficulties and appears embarrassed he describes how he becomes angry and emotional at the thought of a witness pointing out any spelling mistakes:

“I get quite angry - Yes I can feel my colour going up. They nearly get ‘fucking put that pen down’ – Because they’re treating it as a problem. It’s not a problem, just read the fucking statement. It’s not a problem, just get on with it, you know what I’ve said, you know what it means, read it and get on with it. Has he stolen it or has he not. It’s not about my spelling. Has he stolen it because I’m going to go and interview him in a minute, did he steal it. Put the pen down” **(Paul)**

Moody (2012: 156) states that the defensiveness and associated aggression might be reduced and replaced by self-respect if the dyslexic adult received appropriate support and guidance in developing their particular skills, and perhaps undertook a period of specialised counselling. The anger and frustration described by Paul, and to a lesser degree shared by Sean, are clear manifestations and examples of what McLoughlin et al (2002: 6) describe as the secondary characteristics of dyslexia. Moody (2010: 54) confirms that embarrassment, anger and frustration are frequently described by dyslexic adults when engaged in writing for others as shown in Table 14:

<p>“I’m not stupid, I can write a statement, it’s just that, you know, there’s a reason why it might come across as a load of crap as such or doesn’t read right. But like everything, if you do it enough times it becomes second nature anyway” (Sean)</p>	<p>“But if I did a statement for you, educated is the wrong word but somebody who knows how to spell. I won’t say I am dyslexic, I will say ‘my spelling is not very good, I apologise for that, and also words will be missing so when you read that back and you see words missing please tell me and I will add it in there’ ”.(Todd)</p>	<p>“Awful, embarrassed, it’s like giving it to a teacher, in fact one was for a teacher the other day and I gave it to her [statement] I thought, oh god, you’re going to shout at me” (Richard)</p>
<p>“You know that other officers are going to read it as well [Statement], which you can sometimes be a bit embarrassed about” (Emma).</p>	<p>“For me, I see it as a frustrating point of trying to get things, I struggle to get things down on paper” (Eddie).</p>	<p>“it’s embarrassing, because by now, how long have I been working, I should remember streets and estate names but I can’t” (Yvonne)</p>

Table 14: Examples of emotional aspects of dyslexia in policing

It is not just the issues with spelling, handwriting and sequencing with which the participants reported experiencing difficulty. Whatever their length of service, experience or rank none of the participants appear to have developed a deep level of confidence or basic ontological security in the process of taking statements from witnesses or victims (Layder 2006: 167). One further area of reported difficulty was the time that they took to complete a statement in comparison to their non-dyslexic peers:

“I just can’t seem to do statements very quickly, I can’t do this” (Paul),

“Obviously taking statements now is far, far easier but like I say it still takes me a long time” (Ann)

“After a period of time, anything more than a two page statement I am struggling. I have to get the person to read it back because I will miss out words in my statements. So I end up with lots of little arrows and initials. Spelling, I can’t use

their words if I can't spell it. But its statements and court files and stuff like that"

**(Todd)**

"And I'm reading through my statement afterwards and it's taking me longer to read through it and then something will happen in the room and I'll get distracted.

Then I'm watching whatever's going on or something's being said, a sergeant's come into the room or something, and then I'll look back and then I've got to start again, wherever I've been, I can't find where I was. And I'll start off and read through it again, oh yes, that's where I was, yes, carry on, and it's stuff like that. It's the tiredness of looking and reading the words and trying to get them right" **(Rachel)**

In all of the examples cited the officer was required to handwrite statements. This can be challenging even when the officer is starting a shift and recording the statement in a quiet office at the police station. Due to the nature of police work, statements are often completed when the officer is tired or in a noisy location where television or domestic noises cannot or will not be reduced for the purpose of taking the statement (Bartlett 2010: 106; McLoughlin et al 2002: 36). Steve is not alone amongst the participants in suspecting that his peers are suspicious of the extra time that it requires him to complete a statement:

"The reason why it takes me an hour and a half to take that statement, where it may take Jo Bloggs an hour, is because I am dyslexic. And somebody who's not dyslexic, who has no knowledge or understanding of dyslexia, may think that's a bit of a way of shirking it and saying, well he just wants an extra half an hour to enjoy himself" **(Steve)**

It is not surprising that all of the participants reported that they perceived that it took them longer to take a statement in comparison to their non-dyslexic peers. Whether they do take longer or not is not the key issue here; it is the self-perception that it takes longer that brings pressure and anxiety. A number of the participants had experienced negative comments from their supervisors and peers regarding the perceived extra time that it took the dyslexic officer to take the statement. Ann describes her experience:

“Yes they would take the Mickey, they still take the Mickey and in fact ‘*god no, you’re not letting .....do a statement are you, you’re not, oh god we’ll pick you up in 4 hours*’. But it was either you’re going to take it one way of oh god, you know, cry your eyes out or tell them to ‘fuck off’. – But was it done in a gentle way as in you didn’t take it as insulting, it was just humour and banter, or was it actually a little bit malicious but you laughed it off” **(Ann)**

Ann appears to initially accept the comments of her peers as ‘banter’; however as she reflected upon her experience in the interview it became clear that she recognised the behaviours on occasion to be potentially malicious. The time and space of the face-to-face research interview appeared to have provided Ann with an opportunity to critically consider the events described. Despite several years of experience and practice at taking statements, the majority of participants continue to describe difficulties with the writing and construction of them:

“So I’m more structured now and I’ve stopped panicking about, god I’ve got to write a statement. I hate it, I utterly detest taking statements. I had to take one yesterday, it was 3 pages but I know I got everything in and I kept having to apologise to the chap and he was fantastic but it took me ages” **(Ann)**

The reported difficulties with taking statements have also influenced promotion and specialisation choices of participants within the police service. There are some roles where the taking of lengthy and detailed statements is a daily activity for example the Criminal Investigation Department (CID):

“.....wouldn’t even consider doing the level two rape statements and things like that because they are not up to scratch” **(Marcia)**

“For one thing I have never gone into CID or any department that requires long statement taking. Erm as a PC I struggled with putting files together but coped” **(Ursula).**

“I could never be someone who is involved with large amounts of words or numbers ...um..... I mean I would never dream of going into CID or major crime”  
(**Tom**)

The processes involved in taking and writing a statement are all identified and recognised areas of difficulty associated with dyslexia (McLoughlin et al 2002: 4; Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002: 3; Bartlett 2009: 25; Moody 2010: 3)

## 6.5 Templates and Useful Tools

Earlier in this chapter I suggested that a statement could be described as formulaic. One tool that several of the participants identified as helpful is the development and use of templates or aide memoirs:

“I have templates for, I think it's six different templates, one for an assault, one for a robbery, one for criminal damage, one for theft, one for public order, so they're the main ones for the main offences I come across and what I use, even now, two and a half years in, to take a statement” (**Steve**)

“They were generated by me.....sort of spidergrams and fortunately for me I'd got a format that really suits me. But that's, to me my way of coping is by making sure I've got some sort of support” (**Eddie**)

“Every statement I still use prompt cards, I have to use prompt cards to remind myself of the order it needs to be, and I still have them there. I don't mind statements, because they are important, I don't mind doing it there, so I will do it as my prompt card says, right make sure you put in blah, blah, blah, the next bit is. I have to put that in there and I have to have all my ADVOKATE the reason that is there for, because otherwise I will miss it out” (**Todd**)

Even after years of experience several of the participants described using templates and aide memoirs when writing statements. The use of these techniques can prove beneficial for the dyslexic adult in practice as it boosts confidence in their ability to complete the task (Morgan & Klein 2000: 114). The shared concern described by these participants was the fear of missing something out and a lack of trust in their own memory.



The use of aid memoirs and templates when completing statements and reports is not restricted to the dyslexic participants in this study of course. Many non-dyslexic police officers use these techniques in the completion of reports and statements. The point here is that the fear and expectation of forgetting something important is specifically caused by a deep lack of confidence or trust in their working and short-term memory. These anxieties and fears are commonly reported by dyslexic adults (Grant 2009: 57; Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002: 77; Morgan & Klein 2000: 14).

Whilst the majority of participants reported that they were required to handwrite statements a small number described their use of computer software:

“I was happy doing statements on computer and I think I always will be. And in Westshire<sup>5</sup> I was doing a lot more statements on the computer, in fact all my statements were on computer, so I was happy doing statements” **(Dale)**

“I do mine on a computer where I can type it and I can spell check it. I found them quite difficult [handwriting]. Erm it would be quite a slow process for the person giving the information because I'd be constantly, wait a moment, I'll just get that bit down” **(Paul)**

“If forced to handwrite statements then would take loads of notes and then go to station, type it up and then return to get it signed” **(Carl)**

“I get witnesses etc. to come to the station. If I can help it they come to the station. – Types statements - Because it's so much easier to write a statement on a computer because I can move it about, I can correct all my mistakes and I can make it flow better” **(Ann)**

Ann is not alone in describing her preference for typing statements. It allows for spelling and grammar checking as well as allowing for the chronology and sequencing to be altered

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<sup>5</sup> Westshire is the fictional place name used throughout this study in order to protect the identity of any participant.

prior to signing by the witness. The use of word processors can significantly reduce the anxiety and stress described by the majority of participants by reducing what McLoughlin et al (2002: 159) describe as the cognitive load. The load is reduced where the dyslexic police officer can focus upon the content of the statement rather than the spelling, legibility and neatness.

This process has a positive effect on the confidence of the dyslexic police officer and Paul is typical when he states that he is quicker at typing statements than handwriting them. It is not surprising that many of the officers choose to type statements where possible. Whilst those police officers at quieter police stations were able to record notes from witnesses and then return to the police station to type the statement before returning for the witness's signature; officers from busier stations felt unable or unwilling to follow this practice due to time pressures and volume of incidents that they are required to attend.

“I think because I work in a world now where I can type all my statements, and I can spell check them, and they even tell me if my grammar is not that good, I think I have probably, I wouldn't say get away with it, but I think because of that the work that I create is to a very high standard, or I like to think it is” (**Carl**).

Carl and his peers who regularly type statements describe making use of the spellchecking, grammar checking, thesaurus options together with the 'Cut & Paste' features of word processing software. Participants who used this facility did so only to assist in re-ordering the chronology of the statement and not to copy one piece of text to a different statement. The officers describe being less stressed and anxious about taking statements. The use of technology in this context could be a clear example of a Reasonable Adjustment for a dyslexic police officer within the meaning and scope of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2010. Disappointingly not all of the participants were aware that typed statements were acceptable:

“A typed up witness statement, first actual witness statement, would not be admissible in court” (**Ben**)

Ben and Linda were not alone in assuming that typed statements would not be acceptable to the court. Participants also suggested that senior police officers also created barriers to the use of technology, prescribing blanket bans on the typing of statements:

“I’d be very nervous about written statements and quite angry when the Chief Superintendent of the division said all officers will handwrite their statements, I don’t want to see officers typing statements at all, and they need to handwrite their statements sat in a panda car on the street.....” (**Paul**)

Whilst the sentiment of the senior officer’s decision can be understood in the context of high visibility policing, the direction that all statements must be handwritten is discriminatory and fails to take into account the needs of dyslexic police officers. This is perhaps another example of avoidable and unnecessary barriers to dyslexic police officers operating and functioning comparably with their non-dyslexic peers. It is worthy of note that as this current study was completed, the Justice Minister Damien Green announced plans for the digitalisation of all criminal justice documentation from the police officer through to the courts, probation and prison service. All previously handwritten materials would become electronic (Green 2013).

Almost all participants reported experiencing difficulty with statement writing with very few able to type statements. The general rule described by the participants in this study is that they are expected to handwrite statements. The typing of the statement would be seen as a change to the usual workplace processes and in the context of this study it could be considered to be a Reasonable Adjustment.

## 6.6 Workplace Assessment of Needs

Four participants completed their initial police training at a university. All of the participants who had been trained at a university reported having accessed the Disabled Student Allowance scheme (DSA) (see Chapter Two for a full discussion on the DSA scheme). Adrian and Steve reported having undertaken an *assessment of needs* based upon their programmes of study. They were all provided with laptop computers with separate printers together with a range of software and training. Two participants reported using the DSA-provided laptop which was intended for use in their academic studies to write witness statements.

“The only RA equipment came from DSA and not Access-to-Work, They gave me a laptop but that actually wasn’t through the, Westshire Constabulary, in terms of technology, haven’t actually given me anything. It was the disability student’s allowance who’s actually gave me the laptop with the extra support package on, gave me a Dictaphone and gave me a spell checker” **(Steve)**

Whilst the DSA process allowed dyslexic police officers to access equipment and training very quickly, the needs assessment on which it was based, was education specific. Fitzgibbon and O’Connor (2002: 75) specifically caution against the use of educational assessments for adults in the workplace. The adjustments and technological recommendations required for the Further or Higher Education studies can differ significantly from those required in the workplace and very specifically in the operational police role.

The appropriate route for accessing a workplace assessment for dyslexic police officers is through ‘Access to Work’ which is a scheme operated by Job Centre Plus for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (Moody 2010c: 30; Reid, Came & Price 2008). Of the twenty five participants in this study only six received an assessment of needs

through Job Centre Plus. Of the nineteen participants who did not have a needs assessment two were specifically refused work place needs assessments. This is further evidence of disability related discrimination and is contrary to the requirements of both the DDA 2005 and the EA 2010. To access the system dyslexic police officers are required to contact the Disability Advisor at Job Centre Plus to arrange a meeting. Once the Disability Advisor is satisfied that the dyslexic officer meets the criteria then a Work Place (needs) Assessment is arranged (Moody 2010: 27; Leather and Kirwan 2012: 159). The Access-to-Work scheme is more fully explained in Chapter Two of this thesis.

A small number of participants were made aware of the Access to Work scheme through their managers and Human Resources departments. Another small group including Ben and Sean became aware of the scheme through their Police Federation representatives only when their employers were seeking to dismiss the officers due to issues of alleged poor performance. As was discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis a professionally conducted Workplace Assessment of Needs is an absolute requirement of any dyslexic employee.

Many of the participants including Yvonne, Linda, Audrey and Dale were not aware of the Access to Work Scheme prior to the face-to-face interviews in this study. Of those who were aware of the scheme many reported difficulty and frustration in accessing the support:

“I’d had this report and that I’d had a needs assessment done through University for my studies (MA) and obviously they’d advised that I needed some equipment. And he said, well go away to the Job Centre, they’ll do a needs assessment and that was it.....I went to the Job Centre, spoke to the Disability Advisor there and had an interview and explained what was going on and they said basically that, I was unlikely to lose my job because of my disability and that, although it affected me, it wasn’t greatly and it was a bit of a grey area and they couldn’t help me” (**Adrian**)

Adrian's experience is not unique to this cohort; Ann reported a very similar experience when she took her assessment report to a meeting with the Disability Advisor at Job Centre Plus and was refused support. This is clear evidence of discrimination and a contributory factor to the continued oppression of neurodiverse people in education and employment.

“The purpose of the workplace assessment is to provide the employee and the employer with evidence based recommendations for reasonable adjustments within the context of the job.... It should look at the whole person, including his or her skills and abilities. It should be flexible, individualised.....the recommendations should facilitate progression and independence” (Leather and Kirwan 2012: 157)

Leather and Kirwan (ibid) suggest that the workplace assessment should be personal and role specific and yet in some instances the needs workplace assessment consisted of little more than a brief meeting or telephone conversation with the assessor:

“I had some bloke come down to see me, had a meeting here. It was only about a half an hour meeting but then they did their report, which suggested English lessons by a dyslexic tutor and some technology in the form of a laptop computer, portable printer and the use of a software programme for use with, for dyslexic people. Erm, they recommended several and the one we went for in the end was TextHelp Plus” (**Kevin**)

Both Kevin and Ursula experienced very brief workplace assessments which are contrary to the recommendations of experts in the field (Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002; McLoughlin et al 2002; Leather & Kirwan 2012; Mackenzie 2012; Kindersley 2009). Ursula described the process as mechanical and what was produced was little more than a generic shopping list of IT resources and in no way role or individual specific. These reports are in direct contradiction of Moody who suggests that an effective workplace assessment is “complex, lengthy and multi-faceted”:

“It wasn't a true assessment of my needs, and a lot of the stuff they recommended was, it wasn't practical” (**Ursula**)

Fitzgibbon and O'Connor (2002: 41) argue that all dyslexia related workplace assessments should be conducted either by an occupational psychologist or at least by a professional person who is being supervised by a psychologist with specific knowledge of adult dyslexia. Further, they argue that the assessment includes a thorough and structured interview whereby the previous experiences of the dyslexic employee are considered against the cognitive profile identified in the diagnostic assessment report (ibid: 76). Clearly the dyslexic police officer must be consulted and included in the process and adjustments must not be forced or imposed on the officer. It is important to remember that dyslexic adults do not always know what they need and what is available for them in the police workplace (Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002: 74).

Ursula was refused a laptop computer by her senior managers; she was provided with software but not the training required for using the software. It is clear from the reports of the six participants that did have assessments of needs through Job Centre Plus, that despite the recommendations of Fitzgibbon and O'Connor (2002), Disability Advisors who undertook the police workplace assessments did not always have an expert knowledge of dyslexia or of the role of the police officer, when making assessments and recommendations. Marcia recounts an exchange with the workplace needs assessor regarding the provision and use of an audio recording device whilst on police patrol:

**Marcia** 'I don't want a Dictaphone, a Dictaphone is pointless for me, I won't listen to myself; I don't like listening to myself'

**Assessor** 'Oh it's dangerous while you are driving, I will give you a Dictaphone'.

**Marcia** I am not using an electronic thing,

**Assessor** 'You just press it and hold it in your lap,

**Marcia** 'I am getting in and out and in and out of the car, no - that won't work'.

**Assessor** ‘I will give you a Dictaphone anyway.

**Marcia** ‘It won’t work, it’s not good for me”,

Marcia described to the assessor that she forgets the letters and numbers on a vehicle registration plate as soon as it disappears from sight. This was commonly reported by the majority of the participants in this study. Marcia explained to the assessor that she writes the registration details onto her hand immediately:

“Writing on my hand because I can’t remember number plates so if I am in front of the car and I can see the number plate I can do it. But if the car moves away, it’s gone, out of my head, can’t do it, so I write it on my hand” (**Marcia**)

Marcia rejected the suggestion made by the assessor on the basis that she does not like the sound of her own voice nonetheless the suggestion and recommendation is highly appropriate and safer than her current practice of writing on her hand whilst she is driving.

## 6.7 Expert versus Generalist

The example described suggests that the person undertaking the workplace assessment does not necessarily need to understand all of the functions and activities of the police role; though a three way meeting between a police supervisor or tutor constable, the dyslexic officer and the assessor may have prevented the issues raised by Marcia (See Chapter Two). Although the Dictaphone might not be useful for Police National Computer (PNC) checks, it might have been more useful in other activities and yet disappointingly Marcia appears only to have seen the use of the Dictaphone in the narrowest of possible options and thus rejected the possibility of its potential usefulness. This might have been resolved if the suggested use of the Dictaphone had been explained or demonstrated by someone with awareness of how it might be used by a dyslexic police officer in the operational role.

Where technology was provided it was not always compatible with the current police Information Technology systems. It did not always come with the relevant or necessary



training. In some cases described by the participants the technology and or training came too late and officers were forced to leave the service before adjustments could be put in place. Cost was often cited as a reason for not providing equipment despite the high percentage of funding that the Access to Work scheme provides (DWP 2012). This perhaps suggests a lack of understanding of, or willingness to engage with, the scheme by police employers:

“What are the chances of being able to get a laptop that I can actually type up a witness statement and then print it off? The answer to that was we've got so many laptops in Westshire we have lost quite a few of them....So it was no.....no we wouldn't be able to finance it anyway” **(Ben)**

Where participants did utilise the Access-to-Work scheme the results were not as they had hoped or expected. Leather and Kirwan (2012: 159) argue that the culture of an organisation such as the police service should also be taken into account when making recommendations. Despite a timely workplace assessment and the production of a report some participants did not receive the recommended technology or training:

“Within 7 weeks of that assessment Access to Work, the Job Centre had got a case worker there. Within another month or so he had sent recommendations, he'd had me reassessed, sent recommendations to the force with regards to IT equipment.....I received the computer in October last year so we are talking from March to October; I got the computer with the software on it. We are now in April and I haven't had the training on how to use the software, I have never actually used this computer at work for anything..... I can't use it, I have got a laptop with software on it sat in my locker at work. To add to that I have not been given, what's the word not authority, basically the computer is not allowed to be linked to the police systems. I am not allowed to remove that laptop from the station I work at and if I want to connect to the internet I can only do it at that station” **(Terry)**

“After being assessed by the assessor, the thing was you will have a computer, we are looking to get you the right coloured forms, nothing” **(Todd)**

Ian and Terry were provided with the IT very quickly in comparison to their peers. Ian described that the equipment sat in his locker and was never actually used, as the training in the use of the software was never provided, despite numerous requests. The hardware and software provided for Terry were not compatible with the police IT systems and he was not allowed to take the laptop out of the police station to take statements from witnesses. His frustration at his employers is understandable. The purpose of Reasonable Adjustments in this context would be to recognise that dyslexic police officers function differently and the technology should be a means of allowing the dyslexic officer to operate equally when writing statements. The provision of the equipment in this context might allow the police managers to argue that they have 'complied' with the requirements of the DDA 2005 or EA 2010 but this is not the case; Reasonable Adjustment must include time for training and time to allow the dyslexic adult to become competent in the use of such equipment prior to being judged or assessed as incompetent. The conditional and partial provision of technology fails to deliver this equality of opportunity and could at best be described as a tick box exercise on behalf of the employer:

“There were issues with the laptop over security and data protection. So the programmes which, the only thing what they actually put onto the laptop was a statement proforma for me to actually go to a victim and therefore type out a statement in front of them. And then also, they were trying to sort out a portable printer but once again, their systems were so slow, I managed to get one quicker myself through the disability student's allowance” **(Steve)**

“It's got a portable printer with it as well, so I can write statements and print out. The issue that started with, that delayed me getting the laptop was data protection. Erm, for some reason forces seem to shit themselves slightly when it comes to police officers taking electronic things out of the station that they can write up evidence on” **(Kevin)**

Peter describes being provided with equipment through the Disabled Student Allowance scheme; but when he requested Reasonable Adjustment in the workplace he was advised that the process of arranging a workplace needs assessment through Job Centre Plus would take a considerable length of time, too long:

“The needs assessment will take three months but they would only extend my period by 6 weeks” (**Peter**)

In the case of Peter, the university had already provided support through DSA and the PDU team were aware of this situation. When Peter experienced difficulties in the workplace he requested a workplace assessment but was advised that this would take three months. The significant issue here is that despite the recognition of Peter being dyslexic and covered by the DDA 2005 in terms of Reasonable Adjustments the PDU team would only extend his period of probation by six weeks. This would not allow time for the workplace assessor to attend the police station, complete the assessment report or allow time for any equipment and or training to be put into place and allow time for Peter to become competent in its use. The additional time was refused by the police service in this case.

This is an example of discrimination and is perhaps unlawful and yet the culture of the PDU and the police service allowed this to occur. Peter did not have an assessment of needs and is no longer a police officer. What is frustrating and made me very upset after this interview and during the transcription and analysis phases of this research is that I know that the six weeks extension to his assessment period is arbitrary and not prescribed in any policy or legislation. Peter was the victim of significant direct discrimination over a period of six months and as a result Peter resigned from the police service.

Whilst many of the participants experienced difficulty in accessing any equipment and training, one describes very positive effects of the adjustments:

“So they noticed that difference, which changed when I got the laptop through the job, funded through Job Centre Plus I think. They paid 80% of it. Well the laptop itself came from the HR manager who was swapping laptops so I got her leftovers but the Dragon Naturally Speaking and the software stuff was paid for in that way. It was only sort of a couple of months, a couple, 3 months after I’d got the support, a coroner’s file that would have taken 4 hours to write took me about 45 minutes. I was dancing round the room. I’ve told everyone that story, I’ve told everyone that story, and I’ve sort of said to people, that’s the difference that this software can make. It’s all of a sudden I knew, the whole job was in my head and I know what’s in there, I’m in control of that,” **(Paul)**

Prior to the arrival of the equipment Paul described experiencing a high degree of difficulty and frustration in the completion of statements and files. Once the equipment was received and the training had been provided Paul reported that his anxiety levels had reduced significantly. He described being more productive and efficient in the workplace. This is perhaps the ideal outcome of a workplace assessment for a dyslexic police officer and directly links to the purpose and outcomes of the assessment suggested by Leather and Kirwan (2012: 157).

## Summary of Chapter Six

In this final chapter the cohort unsurprisingly identified the writing of police statements as the primary routine policing activity which presented the greatest challenge in the operational role. The processes involved in writing witness statements are the exact processes that are identified as the core difficulties experienced by dyslexic adults by McLoughlin et al (2002) and Fitzgibbon and O’Connor (2002). The requirement to listen, sequence and write contemporaneously is only part of the process. The process is further complicated by noise and other distractions together with the need to focus upon spelling, grammar and handwriting. Of the twenty five participants in this study twenty reported that they were required to handwrite statements despite being entitled to Reasonable Adjustment (RA) by way of the United Kingdom disability equality legislation.

Where RA was requested it was frequently refused or proved to be impractical or non-compatible with the Police Force information technology system. Workplace assessments of needs were either not completed at all or in the majority of cases completed briefly and not by an assessor with expertise or specific knowledge of dyslexia in the police work environment. The emotional effects of writing witness statements are powerfully expressed by the majority of participants; frustration, anger and resentment are all reported as are low-self-esteem, low confidence and avoidance. Very few of the cohort were aware of the Access to Work scheme. Workplace needs assessments were rarely completed thoroughly and in some situations they were refused. Where Reasonable Adjustments were recommended the supply of the resources was often reported to be slow and the resource itself often incompatible with the Police IT systems.

## Chapter Seven: Concluding Discussion

### 7.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers from across England and Wales. From this broad aim I developed three specific research questions:

1. How do dyslexic police officers understand the nature of dyslexia and its relationship with the concept of disability?
2. What motivates dyslexic police officers to disclose dyslexia; what are the experiences and consequences of disclosure?
3. What are the operational challenges for dyslexic police officers; how are processes and products of workplace support accessed by dyslexic police officers?

The features of domain theory together with the principles of Adaptive Theory (Layder 2013) have been instrumental in exploring and understanding the complex nature of dyslexia in policing. Dyslexia as a construct is examined through the discourse of the participants' own voices and through a methodology that has sought the involvement of dyslexic police officers in all stages of the research process. For the first time this study has provided a place and a space in which the voices of dyslexic police officers can be heard. The central themes of this study are: discrimination, disablism and oppression. This penultimate chapter draws together the analysis of Chapters Four, Five and Six through the application and consideration of a range of theoretical concepts and models.

This analysis offers a unique insight into thoughts, feelings and experiences of a sample of dyslexic police officers from across England and Wales. The theoretical frameworks used to analyse the data include: Domain Theory (Layder 2013), Bio-Power, Surveillance and the Medicalization of Disability (Foucault), The Social Model of Disability (Oliver 1990), Models of Dyslexia and Neurodiversity (Cooper 2009), PCS Analysis (Thompson 2011) and

analysis of discourses on police culture (Waddington 1999). The chapter concludes with a review of the research process which includes recommendations for future research as well as recommendations for policy and practice.

The findings of this study and those of the EHRC inquiry: *Hidden in Plain Sight* (2011), present evidence of disability-related discrimination (disablism) both in terms of the treatment of dyslexic employees and the provision of police services across England and Wales. The significance of this pattern of systematic discrimination cannot be understated. The police service has a long record of discriminatory practice towards minority groups and women, both in the United Kingdom and internationally. Police officers in England and Wales specifically are subject to the provisions of: The Human Rights Act 1998, The Disability Discrimination Act 2005, The Equality Act 2010, together with the associated Disability Equality Schemes and Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED). These require all members of the police service to be proactive in challenging and addressing all aspects of disability-related discrimination. These duties and requirements act upon the service both internally with regards to the employment and treatment of disabled police officers and staff, and externally in terms of the service provision aspects of policing.

The psychobiographies and the dyslexic identities of the participants in this study have been shaped and underpinned by the medicalization of disability and through their socialisation, including the educational systems of the United Kingdom. The participants carried their 'rucksacks' into the police service and almost immediately they were exposed to discriminatory practices, mediated by the individual both within and outside of the police service. In many situations judgements regarding the dyslexic police officer were informed by, and underpinned in part by, dyslexic stereotyping, as well as police occupational culture. Cultural levels of discrimination were mediated through those in positions of authority within the police service and the dyslexic police officer was subjected to processes

of control and surveillance. Systems and processes of support were either denied or were not implemented appropriately, which resulted in further levels of discrimination experienced by the participants. The legislation and Government funded schemes designed to support the dyslexic police officer were refused or delayed and were frequently inappropriate and unfit for purpose. The discrimination in this context is once again linked to the structural and cultural levels described by Thompson as well as clearly fitting into the domain of contextual resources of Layder. The discriminatory practices identified in this study can be recognised as clear examples of what Oliver (1990) described as ‘barriers’ which disable people with differences and impairments in western society. The barriers to inclusion and full participation identified in this study are both socially and culturally (police service) created and maintained.

## **7.2 The Dyslexic Identity – The Foundations**

Whilst nearly half of the participants in this study were identified as dyslexic during compulsory education in the United Kingdom, the majority of participants were identified as dyslexic during employment or in post-compulsory education. Some participants had been aware that they were dyslexic for many years or decades whilst other participants in this study were only identified later in their working lives. The length of time that the participants were aware that they were dyslexic did not have any significant influence upon their understanding and descriptions of dyslexia, nor did it alter their perceptions of dyslexia as a disability. With very few exceptions the vast majority of participants in this study described dyslexia in terms of deficit and negative difference, suggesting that dyslexia is an abnormality of the mind or biology of the brain. They used language that is aligned with the individual or medical model of disability (Oliver 1990) and the language that is frequently found in dyslexia assessment reports (Fitzgibbon & O’Connor 2002). The basis for this understanding of dyslexia can be traced back to a time before the word dyslexia was first



coined, back to the eighteenth century in what Foucault (2003) described as the process of medicalizing of the human condition.

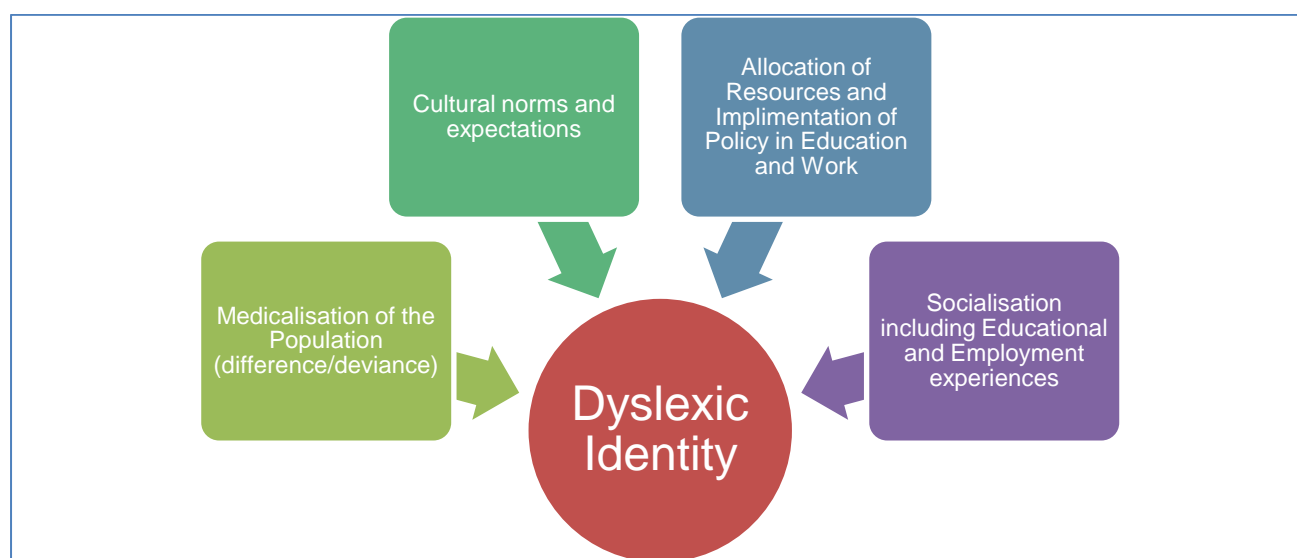
The medicalization of difference in the population has continued through to the present day with the categorisation and identification of differences, with deviations from the prescribed norms being the subject of treatment or 'corrective measures' in education and employment (Tremain 2005: 5). In the context of this study disability and dyslexia are socially-constructed and socially maintained differences. These differences are measured in terms of ability and functionality of the norm or mainstream population and on this basis they are arbitrary and continue to be subject to revision. These constructions are maintained through the dominant discourses of normalcy and mediated through the policies and practices of government and institutions including the police service. On this basis the dyslexic identity of the participants in this study can be understood through the domains defined by Layder (2013). To understand the dyslexic identities which emerged in this study one can consider it in terms of the domain of contextual resources (ibid: 48). The participants in this study have all been identified and self-identify as dyslexic. Dyslexia and disability are socially constructed concepts of difference. These differences are products of, and embedded in, the medicalization of difference espoused by Foucault (2003). The language of the participants is not surprising due to the enduring nature of bio-power and its creation and maintenance of the medical model of disability which has become the dominant discourse of difference (Tremain 2005). The dominance has been achieved through the continued medicalization of difference and driven by a need to cure or prevent difference or that which it considers to be abnormal. Disability and by association, dyslexia is therefore perceived by the majority of the participants in this study as a negative difference and something to be cured or eliminated (see Chapter Two).

It is not just the dyslexic participants who identify dyslexia and disability in such negative terms. The dominance of the medical or individual model of disability retains its powerful influence in government policy with regards to: educational provision, housing, and access to employment and social care to name but a few (Barnes & Mercer 2003: 46). On this basis it is not just the majority of the dyslexic participants in this study who perceive dyslexia and disability in such negative terms but it is also apparent from this study that those with whom the participants have engaged more usually identify dyslexia and disability from a similar negative standpoint. As was described in Chapter Two, it is only in recent decades that the dominance of the medical model of disability has started to be challenged by the proponents of the alternative, Social Model of Disability. The social model of dyslexia is only just beginning to be recognised (See Cooper 2009).

The dominance of the medical model has shaped the cultural values and expectations in terms of ability and, in the context of this study, literacy. Literacy and the skills and abilities associated with it are highly valued in modern societies and therefore anyone who experiences difficulty in this aspect of life (from a medicalization perspective) is in need of treatment (remedial action) or correction due to a deviance from the norm. All of the participants in this study understandably reported difficulty with some or many aspects of literacy including spelling, grammar, punctuation, handwriting and structuring the written word. The majority of the participants reported experiencing significant difficulty when required to complete literacy based activities generally and the difficulties were exacerbated when tired or stressed (McLoughlin et al 2002; Fitzgibbon & O'Connor 2002; Morgan & Klein 2000; Hill 2005a). The participants bring this knowledge and experience into the role of the police officer.

The dyslexic identity (see Figure 9) is further problematical for the participants due to their understanding of disability. The majority of participants rejected the notion that dyslexia is a

disability due to the fact that their understanding of disability is rooted in the visible and widely held perception that disability equates to a physical difference e.g. visual impairment or blindness, wheelchair use or paraplegia rather than less obvious differences including mental health issues and aspects of neurodiversity. The perceptions of the participants are misaligned with the reality and scope of contemporary disability-related legislation. The definition of disability has since 2004 been expanded to include disfigurement and illness including AIDS and some forms of cancer as well as the more traditionally understood impairments such as blindness (See Chapter Two).



**Figure 9: How disability is socially constructed and maintained**

What this study has identified is that the dyslexic identity is clearly complex in the world generally. This is because it is shaped by historical and social norms, expectations and personal experiences. Its complexity is highlighted in this study through the narratives of the participants who have been immersed and subjected to the additional pressures and influences of police occupational culture. The vast majority of the participants in this study held a negative self-concept and low self-esteem with regards to literacy based activities and the learning environment. Layder can illuminate this in terms of psychobiography:

“It is the relationship between an individual and society – or between subjective experience and social organisation – it is one of reciprocal influence” (Layder 2013: 44)

The identity or psychobiography is what each of us carries into any interaction or engagement with another person or institution. It shapes and informs our willingness to act or engage with others and is an important aspect of the ontological security of dyslexic adults. Layder (2004: 41) argues that an individual's ontological security is ‘dynamic, never complete and requires continual work’. This study has identified a range of activities and behaviours that have negatively affected many dyslexic participants' self-concept and in turn their ontological security. This theme is further developed throughout the remainder of this chapter.

### **7.3 Drivers and Motivations for Personal Disclosure**

This section begins with an examination of the drivers and motivations for disclosure described by the participants of this study. It is followed by an exploration of their experiences of disclosure. The acts of disclosure described in this study occurred either as verbal interactions or in the written form through the completion of an application package. In either case the majority of participants described the disclosure experience in negative terms. As discussed in Chapter Two, there is no legal requirement for any person to disclose a disability in the United Kingdom. In this study all of the participants had disclosed that they are dyslexic within the police service. No other contemporary study which examined the disclosure of dyslexia or disability reported anything close to one hundred percent disclosure. One key difference in these studies is that the role of the police officer requires the significant use of literacy skills on a daily basis in environments which are hostile to the dyslexic police officer. The participants in this study are outside of the classroom and in an operational police environment. The role of the operational police officer differs from that of teachers, nurses and social workers in so much as police officers

are frequently required to handwrite lengthy statements and reports away from IT support systems.

Interestingly the motivation and drivers for disclosure in those similar studies presented a high degree of commonality with those of this current study. In essence the decision to disclose is inextricably linked to the dyslexic identity, the psychobiography of the participants in these studies. Disclosure is seen as a means of mediating the difficulties anticipated or experienced in educational and work environments. At one level, disclosure is made to seek understanding and recognition of difference; as a request for judgement not in comparison with non-dyslexic others but as a recognition of their dyslexic differences. The second level of disclosure can best be understood as an extension of the first level in that it takes place for a specific person-centred purpose. The disclosure is a means to seek and secure physical and practical resources which might allow the dyslexic participant to operate equally with their non-dyslexic peers in the workplace. Clearly the principle of making adjustments for an individual rather than seeking to address the issues at a workplace level is deeply enshrined in the workings of the medical model. Access to such resources has historically been restricted to those who can produce evidence of disability and in the context of this study it takes the form of an adult dyslexia assessment report. What underpins both motivating factors is a recognition and/or belief that support is required for the participants in this study to function as police officers on an equal basis with their non-dyslexic peers.

Disclosure might not be required in law but the majority of participants in this study indicated that they believed that they had no option but to disclose, if they were to be recognised as competent police officers by peers and the wider police organisation. The basis for this perception and/or belief can once again be considered in the context of the Foucauldian argument that the medicalization of the population has led to forms of

difference (dyslexia) requiring treatment or rehabilitation; described in the discourse of dyslexia as adjustments. It is also linked to his concept of Bio-power and must also be considered in the context of Layder's domain of Social Setting (Layder 2005) and police occupational culture. The responses to disclosure described by the majority of participants in this study indicated that the dyslexic is seen as abnormal and deviant and therefore requiring treatment or rehabilitation by most people to who they disclosed.

In the context of this study the majority of the participants willingly or unwittingly accepted and internalised a medical and individual model of dyslexia. This is unsurprising due to the dominance and pervasive nature of this model in the policies and procedures of: education, access to services and in employment (see Barnes and Mercer 2003). The majority of participants in this study are so immersed in a non-dyslexic friendly world where both they, and wider social systems and processes, are deeply bound in the medical language and understanding that they are not just different (diversity) but deficient in some way.

The participants in this study disclosed at different stages of their police careers. Whilst a small number disclosed in writing during the police recruitment phases, all of the participants described that they disclosed verbally to peers, supervisors, managers and in a small number of instances, to members of the public. These interactions or encounters occur in what Layder (2013: 45) calls the Domain of Situated Activity. Whilst a small number of the participants reported what they described as positive verbal responses to the disclosure the vast majority did not. Although specific events were analysed in previous chapters of this thesis I believe that it is appropriate to highlight a small number of specific exemplars at this point to retain the personal (agency) focus of this study and to remind ourselves that it is the experiences of dyslexic police officers that are at the very heart of this study. Extreme examples included where the participants were advised that they would be unable to remain as a police officer due to being dyslexic. Here the fear of

unemployment, the impact upon the family and of failure had a significant negative impact upon the ontological security of those participants.

#### **7.4 Disclosure in Action**

In the main the responses from individuals to whom disclosure was made left the participants feeling disappointed or let-down. The vast majority of participants in this study described these feelings following their disclosure to a person within the police service who held a position of authority or seniority over the discloser. The negative responses were not limited to those new to the police service but also included those with substantial service and also those who held senior rank. The negative responses to disclosure of dyslexia can be explained by reference to all four of the domains espoused by Layder (2013: 46) together with the orientating theory of bio-power and surveillance developed by Foucault (Tremain 2005). The participant comes to the encounter with an imaginary rucksack full of life experiences which shape and influence their self-concept and understanding of dyslexia – their psychobiography – driven by contextual resources and social settings. This flow of interacting domains offers a significant insight into the complexities and pressures applied to a single interaction between two people.

This act of disclosure makes the private, public. This knowledge can then be used as a means of control by those in authority within the police service but, equally importantly, it impacts upon disclosure too. The participant reacts and responds to this disclosure and once again this clearly links to the Foucauldian concept of surveillance. The person to whom the disclosure is to be made also brings their own imaginary rucksack, full of their own life experiences, including their police careers, and their perceptions of dyslexia. This situated activity is not power neutral. It occurs between two people of unequal rank and authority within a hierarchical organisation – the police service.

As was discussed earlier in this thesis, police 'canteen' or occupational culture is a powerful and often negative aspect of any police service. Whilst some seek to defend and down-play the influence of police culture, which includes a sense of belonging, sustaining an identity and mutual support (Waddington 1999), the majority of studies identify the negative aspects of police culture as being at the root of prejudice and discrimination in terms of those who generally do not fit the white, heterosexual male stereotype as described in Chapter Two earlier in this thesis. The disclosure must therefore also be seen in the context of the third Layder domain, that of Social Setting (Layder 2013: 47).

The interaction between the participant and the person receiving the disclosure therefore occurs not just as a brief verbal exchange in a vacuum but rather within a frequently described 'hostile' environment in which personal prejudice and the negative aspects of police occupational culture operate. This can only in part be used as a means of explaining the negative interactions described by the majority of the participants in this study. As Thompson (2011) makes clear, discrimination operates on three and interconnected plains: at the: personal, the cultural and the societal levels, each of which informs and connects with the other two. On this basis it is clear that the responses described must be understood beyond the personal level.

It is important to remember that the participants in this study are not from one police area or one police force but from differing ranks, gender and geographical locations across England & Wales. Individuals, whether they hold personal prejudices (and the evidence from this study suggests that some do) are mediators and exponents of the negative aspects of police occupational culture. The fact that the negative attitudes and behaviours occur at multiple diverse geographical locations can be explained only in part by the negative aspects of police occupational culture. The prejudice and discrimination that occurred following disclosure by the majority of participants in this study provide evidence of



widespread disablism within police services across England and Wales. This theme is further considered in Section 7.3 below.

For the majority of participants in this study, disclosure was made in order to request support to show that they could 'do the job' or demonstrate competency in the 'social setting'. The request for changes in the workplace or working practice was seen as a means and a method through which they could 'prove competence' to those who were observing and assessing them as well as proving competency to themselves. This is clearly linked to the concept of surveillance and power espoused by Foucault (Tremain 2005). This study has, through the narratives of the participants, illuminated the unique challenges and difficulties of disclosing dyslexia in the policing environment.

It is to the fourth and final of Layder's domains which I now turn in order to attempt to better understand the basis for the negative responses to disclosure: the domain of contextual resources (Layder 2013: 48). The negative aspects of police occupational culture are only one part of the underpinning issue. When the negative responses are considered through the lens of Layder's domain of contextual resources it is clear to see how the negative responses emanate not only from personal or cultural prejudice but also through the understanding and status of disability held by wider society (Thompson 2011; Layder 2013).

The dominant and pervasive model of disability is the medical model and the basis for the dominance of this macro level understanding of disability as deficit or negative difference is explained by the Foucauldian notion of bio-power and is firmly rooted in the medicalization of the population. Figure ten below provides a visual representation of the relationships and influences between the medicalization of dyslexia as espoused by Foucault (Tremain 2005) together with the domains of Layder (2013) and incorporating Thompsons PCS analysis of discrimination (Thompson 2011).

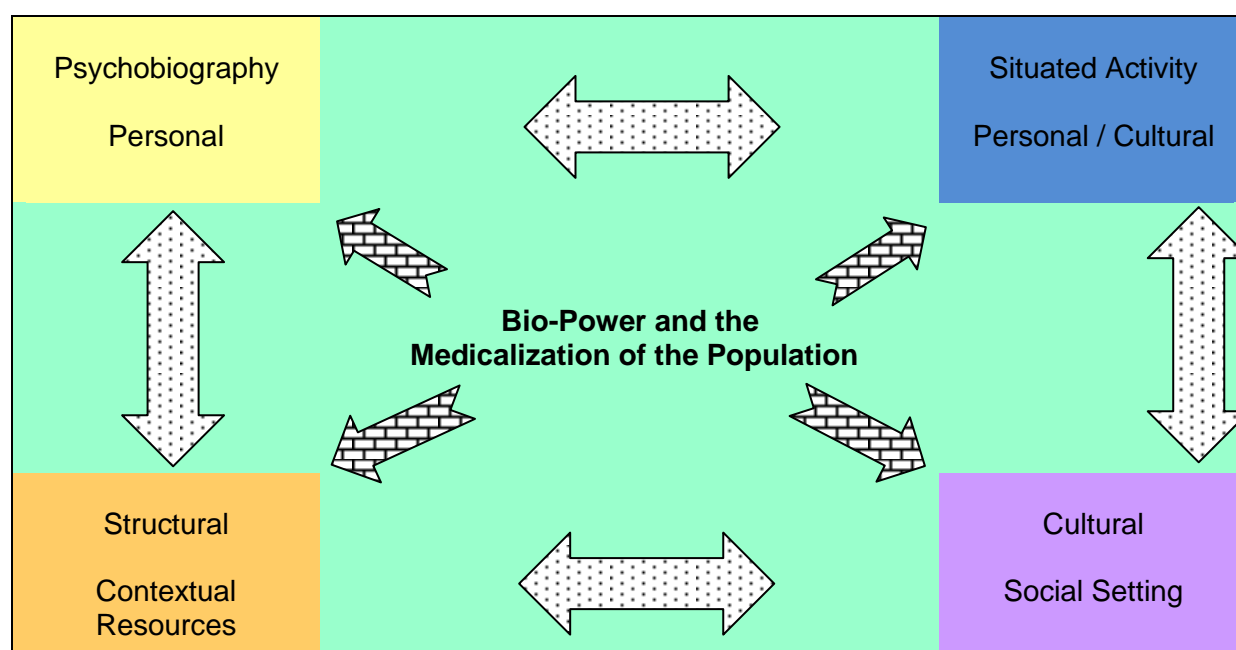


Figure 10: Visual Representation of Power dynamics

The focus of this section of the thesis now shifts from the motivations for, and the acts of, disclosure to the post-disclosure activity. To this point the negative responses of individuals and the organisations to disclosure are limited to attitudes which are not yet translated into actions. The majority of participants in this study made the decision to disclose being dyslexic in the hope and expectation of eliciting understanding and or practical support. The hope and expectation of support and understanding is directly linked to the participants' work as operational police officers. The reason that the participants in this study requested and required support is once again rooted in the outdated and discriminatory lexical requirements of police processes and procedures. It is clear from the analysis of the data in Chapter Six that the majority of the participants in this study would not have requested or required Reasonable Adjustments if they had been allowed to use readily available and inexpensive hardware and software in the execution of their operational duties<sup>6</sup>. Without exception the participants in this study all identified the taking of police statements as being

<sup>6</sup> The definition of the scope of the term 'operational' refers to police officers who are on patrol duties or involved in associated tasks including: supervision, management and training outside of a training establishment.

the single most challenging of all routine policing activities and thus found it necessary to disclose.

### **7.5 Routine Policing Activity – The Statement**

In Chapter Six of this thesis I explained why this should be so and I will only comment briefly at this point and refer the reader back to Chapter Six for a fuller exploration of the key issues described by the dyslexic participants. The majority of participants reported that they were either required by managers to, or it was their expectations that they must, handwrite statements. Whilst a small number described how they would sometimes type their own statements, the vast majority described how they would handwrite the statements away from police stations. Many participants reported taking statements in very noisy locations including: whilst listening to the police radio, handwriting the statement in someone's home which is frequently noisy and full of distractions, whilst under time pressure to complete the activity and move on to the next incident. The vast majority of participants described that the activity caused an increase in the feelings of stress and anxiety.

At the psychological level, participants described thoughts of previous negative experiences, concern about spelling, grammar, chronology and handwriting. Participants were concerned about the witness or victim reading the statements as well as supervisors or peers. A majority of the participants in this study described how these concerns had become a reality when negative comments were made regarding the spelling, grammar and handwriting of the statements. The principal concerns were linked to how they believed they would be perceived by the public and or colleagues and those in authority. Many participants in this study described how the anxiety caused them to rush statements and to make multiple spelling and grammatical errors which resulted in a loss of confidence and

frustration. This further acted to erode the ontological security and further added negatively to the psychobiography of the majority of participants.

The participants in this study recognised and in the majority of instances described their own difficulties and concerns regarding the completion of statements and associated written work. They understandably described being highly sensitised to and aware of their difficulties. The evidence of their difficulties was clearly visible to those who were responsible for their career development including Professional Development Tutors, Operational Tutors and police supervisors. In addition to the visible manifestations of their difficulties in the form of handwritten statements, the police officer and those involved in their career development and subsequently for their termination from the police service or confirmation in post, also maintained detailed records outlining the participants' performance.

Many of the participants described how this constant oversight and record keeping became more intense following disclosure. Participants described how the record keeping added to their sense of anxiety both at work and at home. In some instances participants described how they disclosed very personal and private information in reflective logs and during tutorials. This information was discussed openly in meetings regarding the participants' future within the police service. It is clear from the data that this practice had a detrimental impact upon the ontological security of the disclosing participants and resulted in further isolation within the police service. The reflective logs and frequent progress reports made and maintained by the participants and those in authority can be considered as examples of what Foucault described as surveillance and is linked to his discussion of power and the control of people.

It is linked to the principles of the Panopticon (Tremain 2005): "A prison designed to induce a state of constant visibility, as the archetype of surveillance" (Drinkwater 2005: 236). In the

context of this study the participants are clearly not prisoners in the traditional sense nor are they situated within a physical prison. The principles of power, control and surveillance resonate with the experiences described by the majority of participants in this study. It is upon the content of these documents that senior police officers make their decisions to terminate the employment of the dyslexic police officer. Several participants in this study articulated a deep sense of regret following disclosure and described wishing that they had not been so forthcoming and honest in their disclosures within reflective journals and in tutorials. They learned very quickly but too late that there are no secrets and that they should guard against future disclosures. The participants, as a result, monitored and mediated their own behaviour as if they were under constant observation.

In addition to these documents the participants were in the majority of instances required to provide the police tutors with copies of their dyslexia assessment reports. These reports contain significant personal information regarding the participants' family arrangements, school and previous medical and employment information. The language of the reports is deeply rooted in the discourses of the medical model where difference is described and defined in terms of deficit (as discussed more fully in Chapter Two). Many of the participants in this study described how the dyslexia assessment reports were interpreted by police officers whose only qualification to interpret the complex reports came from their status as trainers and supervisors within the police service. In one troubling example a police constable from the Professional Development Unit informed a performance review meeting attended by senior managers that a participant in this study suffered from 'memory loss and blackouts' following their personal interpretation and analysis of a dyslexia assessment report. (Having read the assessment report myself I can see no reference to blackouts or memory loss.) These comments went unchallenged in the meeting. This clearly discriminatory process adds another dimension to Foucault's concept of panopticism in terms of the exposure of significant and often very private aspects of the dyslexic police

officer's personal history (Hughes 2005: 84). The dyslexic participants are exposed and vulnerable to attack from prejudice and discrimination at both the personal and cultural levels within the police service (Thompson 2011).

An explanation of the events and interactions described by many of the participants, including those who remained in the police service, those who resigned, were sacked or took the employer to Employment Tribunal and were successful, is linked to security and control. Police occupational culture is discussed more fully in Chapter Two yet it is important to reiterate at this point that police occupational culture has been identified as a significant factor in the development and perpetuation of a broad range of discrimination within the police service (see Macpherson 1999). What is both interesting and significant, when seeking to explain why exclusion and such overt discrimination takes place, is that it usually occurs when help and or support is requested by the dyslexic officer. This is linked to the discussion in Section 7.2 above concerning the responses to disclosure by the participants in this study.

Loftus (2008: 773) suggests that a 'backlash' to the institutionalisation of both equality and diversity within the police service following high profile cases e.g. the botched investigations into the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence (Macpherson 1999) and the BBC Panorama documentary (BBC 2003) may explain these types of responses. Research by Loftus (2008: 773) found evidence of resentment towards any 'special treatment' of minority officers. Requests for Reasonable Adjustments and workplace assessments, together with rumours of dyslexic police officers being provided with state-of-the-art laptop computers whilst all non-dyslexic officers were required to use pen and paper, may provide one explanation for the hostility and detrimental behaviours experienced by the majority of dyslexic police officers in this study.

Equally this might help in part to explain the experiences of a small number of participants who through Job Centre Plus described being given insufficient time to access support or for any reasonable adjustment resources to be put in place. Additionally they were given insufficient time to become competent in the use of such resources or to attend and complete any programmes of training or support. These incidents are clear examples of direct disability-related discrimination at the hands of those agents of the state whose duty it is to support employees who are protected by the legislation. The 'backlash' theory of Loftus (ibid) is supported by McLaughlin (2007: 24) and more recently in terms of Gay police officers by Rumens and Broomfield (2012). Despite the negativity experienced by the majority of participants in this study systems and processes of support did exist.

Unfortunately most described that they were unaware of the Access-to-Work Scheme.

Staff support associations could have been useful sources of information regarding the Access-to-Work scheme. The Police Federation is similar to a trade union. Any serving police officer up to the rank of Chief Inspector may join the Police Federation. The Police Federation has been criticised for not representing all staff equally and as a result additional staff support organisations have been established within the police service (See *Brooking v Chief Constable* 2008 for example).

The Black Police Association was established in 1999 to provide specific support to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) police officers as a result of the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993. Likewise the Gay Police Association was established to provide support for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and transgender police officers in 1990 (Loftus 2008: 768). Both groups were established to provide specific support to members of their communities. At the time of establishment both organisations argued that the Police Federation failed to represent BME or Gay police officers (ibid: 768). The National Disabled Police Association

was founded in 2004 though it ceased to operate in 2010 due to a lack of central funding (NDPA 2010).

The NDPA, unlike their BPA and GPA peers did not attract a national profile and in this current study none of the participants were aware of its existence. Where other minority groups have bonded together to form a support network, dyslexic police officers have been unable to develop such an advocacy group to provide mutual support and guidance. The cohort in this study identify that there were no positive advocates to support them when they experienced difficulties or were subject to performance related inquiries.

## **7.6 Access to Inclusion: Enabling/Disabling Support**

As was identified in the previous section a principal driver for disclosure by the participants in this study was to seek practical support in the workplace. This can be translated into a request to be allowed to demonstrate competency in the operational police role. Through the use of assistive technology the vast majority of participants in this study could have demonstrated competency in the completion of statement writing and associated text-based activities that must be completed by police officers. The one route to support available to all of the participants of this study was the Access-to-Work scheme operated by Job Centre Plus on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP 2013). All of the participants in this study are dyslexic and are therefore eligible for inclusion within the scheme. (A full discussion of the scheme is included in Chapter Two). Of the small number who were aware of the scheme, two contacted the Disability Employment Advisor at Job Centre Plus and were incorrectly told that they were not eligible for the scheme. These rejections occurred after the extension of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to include police officers. The participants requested help due to difficulties in the workplace and it was refused by the main agency whose responsibility it is to provide support and in so



doing reduce the stress and anxiety experienced by the dyslexic police officers. Instead the agents further added to their anxiety and stress.

Of the remainder who became aware of the scheme only one experienced what they described as a positive outcome. The Access-to-Work scheme includes the requirement for a workplace assessment of needs. The function of this assessment is to identify and address barriers which exclude people with impairments and disability-related differences from the workplace (DWP 2013). The participants described how the workplace assessments were usually completed either through a brief workplace visit or by way of a telephone discussion. With the exception of one participant, those who experienced workplace assessments of need perceived the experience as unhelpful. The outcome of the assessments often included recommendations being made that were considered generic and impractical or inappropriate in the operational police role

This is an example of what I describe as an approach which is 'mere compliance', where a tick-box or bureaucratic process again takes priority over the needs of the individual. Thus an effective workplace assessment is indirectly linked to the barriers aspect of Social Model of Disability. It is indirectly linked to this model because the workplace assessment is intended to make recommendation based upon the perceived needs of the individual.

A direct connection to the doctrines of the social model would require the workplace assessment to identify a range of barriers which impact upon a broad scope of impairments and differences. Whilst the legislation that requires the completion of the workplace assessment and implementation of Reasonable Adjustment includes a statement suggesting that it is underpinned by the principles of the Social Model of Disability, it is in fact individually and medically motivated and driven, with its roots traced back to the medicalization of the population and bio-power suggested by Foucault (Tremain 2005).

Thus the needs of the state/organisation override the needs of the individual.

The workplace assessments and any subsequent Reasonable Adjustments are recommended and implemented on an individual basis and do not seek to address the needs of others beyond that specific individual for whom the assessment is conducted. If the process were to be driven by the principles of the social model then recommendations would be made which would include changes to: work practices, workplaces, systems and processes rather than the provision of individual items or resources.

Where workplace needs assessment reports were provided many of the participants described that the equipment and/or training recommended in the report was either not provided or significantly delayed. In the majority of instances the participants reported that hardware and software that was provided was incompatible with the police service IT systems. Participants reported that managers were unwilling to allow equipment supplied through the Access to Work scheme to be connected to the police systems and in one case the equipment was not allowed to be taken out of the police station thus defeating the object of its provision. Despite the availability of Government funding for any Reasonable Adjustment, several participants were advised by their police managers that there were insufficient funds available. Disclosure was made in order to access this type of support in the hope and expectation that it would allow the participants to demonstrate competence. The police service response to the assessment reports is further evidence of discrimination. Once again it occurs at the cultural level and mediated through the actions or omissions by individuals within the police services (Thompson 2011).

Further examples of personal and cultural level discrimination linked to police occupational culture include where participants were told by police supervisors that the Access-to-Work scheme would take up to six months and yet they were only being allowed six weeks to demonstrate development. The result of this was that one of the participants was forced to resign from the police service without any access to any workplace assessment or

intervention from Access-to-Work. The six week period to demonstrate development is an arbitrary period and not prescribed or defined in any police related legislation or policy document (Hill 2010b). The outcome of this action was that two of the participants in this study were prescribed anti-anxiety and anti-depressant medication for the first time in their lives. The negative response of the police service through individual police officers and staff clearly had a significant detrimental effect upon the ontological security of these participants. Over half of the participants in this study described that they had taken sickness related absence due to stress and depression, which they described as being caused by expectations at work, and many participants identified dyslexia and the force's response to it as a key factor.

Six weeks is a common period of extension afforded to any probationary or student police officer who is experiencing difficulties in the workplace. The fact that the two participants in this study were dyslexic made no apparent difference to their treatment and the decision making processes of those in authority. The participants were explicitly told that they would not be allowed time to engage with the Access-to-Work scheme and that even if a workplace assessment of needs was conducted that they would still have to demonstrate improvement in their operational duties linked to statements and police related administration within a six week period. The disclosure was made by both participants early in their police service and both described having tried to cope with the literacy demands of the role before seeking help and support. Therefore the two participants were denied reasonable adjustment and even if it had been arranged and implemented then they would not have been given time to become familiar with any resources or attend any associated training. Thus they would not be allowed time to develop and demonstrate their competence. Once again these decisions are made at the individual level but within the hierarchical and authoritarian police service. The conduct of those making these unlawful and discriminatory decisions demonstrates a high degree of repressive positional control

(Layder 2004) or bullying behaviours towards the dyslexic police officers, whose positions and status within the service is weakened by their relative newness to the police service and by their need for help and support from those in authority.

A core requirement of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2010 is a requirement for employers to be 'anticipatory' in terms of provision for all staff who fall within the definition of disability. Despite disclosure the majority of the participants in this study were unaware of the Access-to-Work scheme and were not advised of it by their employing police service in spite of the requirements of the previously described legislation. The refusal to provide or fund Reasonable Adjustments despite the significant contribution made by the Government Department responsible is further evidence of discrimination at the cultural level within the police service (Thompson 2011). This had a negative impact upon the self-confidence and therefore the psychobiography of the participants.

This discrimination at the cultural level is mediated through the actions of individual police officers and managers. Participants in this study provided examples in which they perceived those in positions of authority within the police service, explicitly acting on personal prejudices. This does not apply to every event described by the participants. The provision of Reasonable Adjustment for police officers sits outside of the 'business as usual' or common practice of police culture and is therefore considered abnormal or in the language of Loftus (2009) 'special treatment'. Thus, the resentment expressed in terms of negative responses to requests for Reasonable Adjustments including workplace assessments can be understood in terms of discriminatory practice at both the personal and cultural levels (Thompson 2011).

Having considered the experiences and behaviours described by the participants in this study it is interesting and frustrating to know that in 2002 Lothian and Borders Police began developing and updating a hardware and software package which allows all police officers,

dyslexic or otherwise, to complete statements, pocket note books and fixed penalty notices electronically. All statements are electronically signed and the resources have received approval from: the Home Office, Ministry of Justice, the Crown Prosecution Service and the National Policing Improvement Agency (Now College of Policing) and have been piloted across multiple police services in England and Wales since that time (Dixon 2013). The requirement to handwrite witness statements is outdated, unnecessary and discriminatory. Alternative and equally appropriate resources are widely available and these can be secured through the Access-to-Work scheme at minimal cost to the employer. Had the package been adopted by police services across England and Wales for use by all or even just the dyslexic officers then I suspect that the vast majority of the negative narratives presented in this study might have been avoided.

All bar one of the participants were eventually confirmed as police officers nevertheless the effects of their experiences of difficulty in statement and report writing, together with the refusal or denial of an appropriate workplace assessment or appropriate reasonable adjustments led several participants in this study to revise their career options. This resulted in many participants describing their avoidance of specific specialist departments including the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and promotion. Other participants in this study had very quickly moved from duties that necessitated the taking of statements to alternative roles including the tutoring of new police recruits. The difficulty with all aspects of recording statements was most frequently cited as a key driver for disclosure within the police service by the participants in this study. This was both in terms of seeking emotional as well as practical interventions. The requirement to handwrite statements is not enshrined in law; it has been common practice since the introduction of the modern police force in 1829 (McLaughlin 2007: 3).

With the development of hardware and software in recent decades, alternative means of recording statements have evolved including audio and video recording of interviews with vulnerable witnesses or victims. The requirement to handwrite statements in the twenty-first century is a clear example of an unnecessary barrier or obstacle which has a disabling effect upon many of the participants in this study. With only one exception the participants in this study were required to handwrite statements and in a small number of cases participants had been specifically ordered by senior managers not to type statements. This is clearly an unlawful order and is contrary to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2010.

The requirement to handwrite statements is an example of discrimination at both the personal and cultural levels (Thompson 2011) whereby taken-for-granted assumptions about working practices took precedence over alternative and progressive alternative practices and the needs of the individual. This is also an example of what Layder (2004: 61) describes as 'repressive positional control' where the needs of the individual are overshadowed by the needs to maintain order and business as usual rather than consider and respond to the needs of the individual within the hierarchical police service (ibid: 63). These requirements clearly resulted in a negative impact on the ontological security of the participants.

By applying the lens and filters of domain theory (Layder 2006, 2013) the basis for this discriminatory behaviour can be explained in part through the previously discussed Foucauldian notion of bio-power, normalcy and the medicalization of difference. The dyslexic difference is considered by the non-dyslexic police peers, supervisors and managers in terms of a negative difference and something that requires some special or costly intervention that is not required by 'normal' police officers. This in part might be explained by the notion of 'backlash' suggested by Loftus (2009) and interpreted as a form

of resistance to change and attempt to maintain the 'business-as-usual' perspective often associated with police occupational culture (Waddington 1999, Loftus 2008, 2009).

In these ways the attitudes and the actions of the non-dyslexic staff are in the main driven by the dominant medical model understanding of disability and by extension, are further magnified through the lens of police occupational culture. The discrimination described and experienced by the majority of participants in this study mirrors the experiences of those dyslexic police officers who were successful at Employment Tribunals and Employment Appeals Tribunals (Chapter Two). Furthermore, evidence of discriminatory practices within the police services is not limited to dyslexic police officers and includes discrimination against Black and Minority Ethnic officers as well as Gay and Female police officers (Holdaway & O'Neill 2007; Loftus 2008; Chan 1997). Indeed the discriminatory practices experienced by the participants in this study are not just contained within the police service. The Equality and Human Rights Commission led inquiry 'Hidden in Plain Sight' (EHRC2011) into the deaths and harassment of disabled people in England and Wales found significant evidence of disablism in the working practices of the police and other agencies.

This study has illuminated for the first time the prejudice and discrimination applied to, and experienced by, dyslexic police officers by those in authority both within and outside of the police service. The three questions at the heart of this study have been comprehensively addressed. The findings provide an interesting but disappointing narrative of institutional discrimination through stereotyping and bullying up to and including unlawful direct-discrimination and dismissal from the police service.

**Summary of Chapter Seven:**

In this concluding discussion chapter of the thesis the core themes identified in this study have been drawn together and considered in the context of the orientating theory. The dyslexic identity, the drivers and motivating factors for disclosure are considered and these are followed by an exploration of disclosure events set out by the participants in this study. The key and significant routine policing activity of statement taking is then considered in terms of disclosure and with regards to requests for support and reasonable adjustments in the operational police role.

The themes are considered through the lens and filters of Layder's domain theory, the Foucauldian concepts of power including surveillance and Bio-power together with the principles of the Social Model of Disability and Thompson's PCS analysis. This chapter has identified that disability-related discrimination can be recognised at the personal, cultural and structural levels within the police services which employ or employed the participants in this study. The work of Foucault has illuminated power structures, control and the surveillance of the dyslexic police officers Thompson and Foucault, through engagement with domain theory, have allowed the broad and corrosive range of barriers to inclusion and fairness to be identified, as defined in the Social Model of Disability. The chapter clearly sets out the case for the label of 'disablist' to be applied to the vast majority of police services from which the participants in this study were drawn.



## Chapter Eight – Reflections and Value of this Study

### 8.1 Reflections

This study provides evidence of systemic failures by police services across England and Wales to comply with both the spirit and specific requirements of disability-related anti-discriminatory legislation. It might be argued that disablism and disability discrimination exists in wider society, and so why should we expect police officers and the police service to set such high standards and to challenge unlawful disability-related discrimination both within and outside of the police service? It is important to remember that every police officer, upon joining the police service in England and Wales, attests before a magistrate:

"I.....do solemnly and sincerely declare and affirm that I will well and truly serve the Queen in the office of constable, with **fairness, integrity, diligence and impartiality, upholding fundamental human rights and according equal respect to all people**; and that I will, to the best of my power, cause the peace to be kept and preserved and prevent all offences against people and property; **and that while I continue to hold the said office I will to the best of my skill and knowledge discharge all the duties thereof faithfully according to law.**" (Emphasis added)

(S28 Police Act 1996)

Further, I would argue that police officers, and by definition the police services, have both moral and ethical obligations regarding their interactions with disabled/dyslexic human beings both within and outside of the police service. The legislation is not a replacement for these obligations, but acts as a means of providing sanctions for failure and non-compliance. The requirements of attestation, together with the powers and authority afforded to police officers, are significant.

Disabled people generally, and dyslexic police officers specifically, have a right to expect that they will be treated with dignity and respect by those whose duty it is to provide support and redress for those who are victims and survivors of unlawful discrimination in society. If

the police service as employers and service providers, acting as gatekeepers for entry into the criminal justice system, do not fully engage in anti-discriminatory practice then the discrimination and oppression of dyslexic police officers and disabled people at the hands of the police service will persist.

Domain Theory has provided a mechanism through which the experiences and perception of the participants have been illuminated and for their voices to be heard for the first time. A disturbing pattern of prejudice, discrimination and oppression at multiple levels and by various agents across a broad range of police services has been identified in this study. There are no quick or easy solutions to the discriminatory practices and attitudes which have been identified. It will only become possible if there were willingness and a desire for change. It would require a concerted effort to raise awareness of alternative models of disability, and prejudices and stereotypes to be shown to be based upon flawed and outdated notions of difference. This might just be possible, but it will require a significant change in societal understanding of disability and specifically dyslexia from the medical to the social model. It will also require a concerted effort to challenge and change the negative aspects of police occupational culture which have been identified as a key factor in the perpetuation of the discriminatory attitudes and behaviours which result in the disadvantage experienced by the overwhelming majority of participants in this study.

This study represents a first significant exploration and examination of the experiences and perceptions of people, human beings, real people who in this study have described being subjected to significant levels of bullying, discrimination and oppression simply because they process information differently to the majority of the population. It is hoped and anticipated that this study will offer a foundation or scaffold upon which future research can be built and is so doing allow the voices of other neurodiverse police officers to be heard more fully.

## 8.2 Value of This Study

The application of Layder's Domain Theory in this trans-disciplinary study has allowed for the complexity of the agency/structure relationship to be understood not in terms of dichotomous positions, but more accurately as a series of domains which interact and provide bridges between the individual and society. Domain theory has allowed for conversations to take place across the interconnected layers; it allowed for a deeper level of understanding of the core issues identified in this study. In particular it has enabled bridges to be constructed between ideas and concepts so as to develop a deeper understanding of ideas including:

- The Social Model of Disability
- Disclosure – The drivers and the 'Act'
- Police Occupational Culture and the Individual
- Foucault, surveillance and Bio-power.

Thirdly, this study has been informed by principles of participatory research which placed the participants at the centre of the study and sought their involvement in the whole research process. At the beginning of this study a phased strategy was applied, so as to allow for the orientating themes and priorities to be identified by the participants. The self-completion questionnaire was followed by a face-to-face interview only once the data from the questionnaire had been collected and initially analysed. On reflection the participants might have been encouraged to be involved more fully in the analysis phase of this study.

Fourthly, this qualitative study enabled the collection of deep and rich data, which in turn has allowed the authentic voices of the dyslexic police officers to be heard. The fine detail of lived experiences was considered more powerful and illuminating than numbers or frequency of events.

Finally, the role of the 'insider' researcher had its benefits and strengths in this study.

Participants entrusted the researcher with very personal information and accounts of events which 'outsiders' might not have understood, in the context of police policy, procedures, codes of practice and finally police occupational culture. This trust is linked to the ethical standpoint of the researcher and his commitment to confidentiality. The shared and common understanding of police language and terminology allowed for a high degree of engagement and flow of discussion.

### **8.3 Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

The following recommendations for policy and practice are directly drawn from the findings of this study:

**Awareness Training – Dyslexia:** Staff who have any involvement or responsibility for the recruitment, training, tutoring or supervision of police officers should attend dyslexia awareness training. This training should include a generic overview of dyslexia from a social model perspective, followed by a police officer role-focused session which considers the routine policing activities undertaken by the dyslexic officer. The training should include an introduction to the Equality Act 2010 and the Access-to-Work scheme. The focus of the training should be people-centred and not process-driven. Reference should be made to the findings of employment tribunals and include an exploration of the events that have led to officers taking the employer to the tribunal.

**Awareness Training – EA 2010 and Reasonable Adjustment:** Staff who have any involvement or responsibility for the recruitment, training, tutoring or supervision of police officers should receive specific accredited training in the scope and requirements of the Equality Act 2010. They should receive specific accredited training on the scope, application and processes of the Access to Work scheme operated by Job Centre Plus on

behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions. The focus of the training should again be people-centred and not process-driven.

**Partnership Working:** Local Disability Employment Advisors and Work Place Assessors from Job Centre Plus should develop a professional working relationship with their local police service recruitment and training departments, with a view to developing mutual understanding of the Access to Work scheme and the specific routine policing activities conducted by dyslexic police officers in and beyond the police training environment.

**Information Technology:** Police Service Information Technology specialists should engage with computer hardware and software manufacturers to develop a laptop- sized or tablet device which is compatible with police IT systems and which has the functionality to transcribe dictation, word process and allow for electronic signing of text-based activities, including statement-taking. This could be developed at the national level and be used by police services beyond England and Wales e.g. the Royal Military Police or the Police Services of the Commonwealth. The typing of police statements should be positively encouraged, for both dyslexic and non-dyslexic police officers. This shift in policy and practice would allow all police officers to produce statements in a uniform format which can be spell- and grammar-checked as well as restructured and edited. The effect of this would be an improvement in the quality of the evidence obtained from witnesses and victims by all police officers, not just the dyslexic minority. The piloting of the scheme developed by Lothian and Borders Police should be extended to all police services across England and Wales at an accelerated rate. The significance of this process would eliminate the need for word processing to be seen as a reasonable adjustment required by a minority of police officers; instead it would become part of mainstream business as usual police practice.

**Technology in Anticipation:** Police services should hold a small supply of laptop or tablet computers for use by dyslexic police officers in training and in the operational role, whilst

the officer awaits the Work Place Assessment and the provision of specific reasonable adjustments. This is an anticipatory action and is required by the Equality Act 2010. The police service knows that dyslexic people join the service and so the service must make equipment available from their first day. The effect of this recommendation would be that the dyslexic police officer does not have to wait between three and six months for the Workplace assessment and provision of reasonable adjustment resources.

**Workplace Assessments:** Workplace assessments should only be conducted by assessors who have a specific, not general, awareness of dyslexia in the workplace. All assessments must include a face-to-face meeting with the dyslexic officer, a review of the dyslexia assessment report together with involvement of a member of the police service who is familiar with the role of the police officer and who has the authority to authorise the workplace adjustment. The intended effect of this recommendation is that any training or resources recommended would be bespoke to the individual and not based upon a shopping list approach. The joint assessment will allow for a greater understanding of the police role by the assessor and the requirements of the scheme by the police member.

**Time & Police Regulations:** Where a dyslexic police officer is experiencing difficulty in the workplace, sufficient time should be allowed for a workplace assessment to take place and for the equipment to be provided. This will also allow time for the dyslexic officer to receive training in the use of any equipment, and for the officer to become familiar and competent in its use. This recommendation is contentious, as police regulations include prescribed deadlines for progress through the competency processes. These need to be revised, as they potentially conflict with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 which takes primacy over police regulations and other legislation. The policy and procedure must shift from being process-driven to being person-focused. The effect of this change would be to reduce the stress and anxiety described by many of the participants in this study.

**Transparency:** A police service-wide document should be developed in the form of a flowchart for inclusion in police recruitment packs and for display in training and Human Resource departments. This should clearly set out the route and contact details of how to access reasonable adjustments through the police and via Access-to-Work. An example of a process chart which I have developed and use with a local police service is included as Appendix Ten.

**Ownership:** Responsibility for the implementation of workplace assessment and reasonable adjustment should be administered by Human Resources departments and not managed by Occupational Health departments. Dyslexia is not a medical condition and yet many participants reported that Occupational Health were responsible for arranging reasonable adjustments. This unwittingly reinforces the medicalization of dyslexia and is both outdated and damaging. Where stress, anxiety and/or depression are reported by the dyslexic officer, then Occupational Health and HR should jointly investigate the possible causal factors. The possible effect of such joint intervention might be a speedier and joined-up response to the underlying causes of any stress and other problems.

## 8.4 Recommendations for Further Research

As I have described several times previously in this thesis, this study represents an early, exploratory, small-scale yet significant first academic inquiry into the previously under-researched experiences and perceptions of a sample of dyslexic police officers from across England and Wales. The sample of twenty-five dyslexic police officers included a mixture of male and female officers, gay officers as well as BME officers. The sample included police constables, sergeants, inspectors and chief inspectors. A limitation of the current sample is that the participants were drawn in the main from former students at a regional police training centre who were known to me, whilst a small number who participated in the study were friends or acquaintances of these. The number of dyslexic police officers, special

constables and Police Community Support Officers is unknown. Not all dyslexic people disclose to their employer and police services do not always keep records.

**Research Area One:** Demographic information from one police service in England and Wales identified that thirty-nine percent of police recruits were assessed as dyslexic during initial police training (Sharpe 2013). On this basis a larger scale quantitative study conducted externally to the police service could be used to identify the likely numbers of dyslexic police officers in the police services of the United Kingdom. Further qualitative studies could identify any differences and similarities between the experiences of dyslexic male and female officers, or those of gay, bi-sexual or transgendered officers, or those of particular black and minority ethnic officers in an exploration of what Vernon (1998) describes as 'multiple oppression'. Regional and local variations in experience could also be identified and theorised in such studies.

**Research Area Two:** There remains a dearth of research exploring the occupational choices of dyslexic adults. Future research might build upon the foundations provided by this current study together with the research of others in terms of nurses, teachers and social workers.

**Research Area Three:** Finally, one further area of consideration relates to the participants in this current study. I am minded, with their consent, to translate this cross-sectional research for the purposes of the PhD into a longitudinal study over the next ten years, to follow their career trajectories and experiences over a fifteen year period.



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**Appendices:**

Number	Name
1	Grant Definition of Neurodiversity
2	Information Sheet for Participants
3	Informed Consent Form – Blank
4	Questionnaire Format Option Form
5	Self-Completion Questionnaire V1
6	Self-Completion Questionnaire V3
7	Interview Guide v1
8	Interview Guide v4
9	Flowchart outlining DSA Process
10	Flowchart outlining Access-to-Work Process

## **Appendix 1**

“Neurodiversity is present when an exceptional degree of variation between neurocognitive processes results in noticeable and unexpected weakness in the performance of some everyday tasks when compared with much higher performances on a subset of measures of verbal and/or visual abilities for a given individual. These everyday tasks, which are dependent on the neurocognitive processing of information, include tasks of learning and remembering, time management, social interaction and attention span, as well as tasks requiring fine and gross motor skills.

It is an umbrella term for it encompasses a range of specific learning differences, including dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, ADD/AD(H)D, and Asperger’s. One or more specific learning differences may be present simultaneously, and it is possible for some forms of neurodiversity, such as weakness only in working memory, to lack a weakness only in working memory, to lack a well-known diagnostic category, such as dyslexia.

Neurocognitive variations may be inherited, (i.e. developmental in origin), and /or acquired (e.g. through perinatal or postnatal cerebral trauma). In most instances, neurocognitive variation in lifelong.

Neurodiversity is a positive statement of differentiation, for while it explicitly refers to individuals whose everyday ways of thinking and behaving differ in certain key aspects from the majority of people, it rejects the assumption that these differences are dysfunctional and are to be ‘cured’. Instead, there is a societal obligation that others make suitable adjustments and accommodations to enable inherent potential to be fully realised”

(Grant 2009:35)

## **Appendix 2**

**1. Research Study Title:**

**Policing Dyslexia: An Examination of Policy, Practice and Experience of Dyslexic Police Officers within the Criminal Justice System.**

**2. What is the purpose of this research?**

In this study I am examining the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers in the operational role. I am exploring the issues and challenges that dyslexic police officers face. I am also studying the experiences and perceptions of tutor constables, operational supervisors and managers. In 2004 disability discrimination legislation was extended to include the police service for the first time. In this study I am exploring the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers who have joined the police service before and after this change in the law. I am studying for a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). This study began in 2005 and is expected to be concluded in 2008.

**3. Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen because you have previously disclosed to me that you identify yourself as dyslexic, that you have been screened or assessed as dyslexic or that you believe yourself to be dyslexic. You have also been chosen because you are or have been a police officer, special constable, police community support officer or other law enforcement professional. It is your experiences and perceptions that are the centre of this study. At this time it is unclear exactly how many other volunteers will participate in this study, however it is possible that up to forty others may be selected.

**4. Do I have to take part?**

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw from this research at any time and without giving a reason and it will make no difference to the way you are treated.

**5. What will happen to me if I take part?**

Firstly, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire. This will include some personal but not intimate questions such as; your name, age, gender, station, force and contact details. It will also contain questions relating to any dyslexia screening or assessment that you may have undertaken since leaving school. The questionnaire will be available in a variety of formats including; on paper, electronically as an email or verbally by Dictaphone.

Some weeks later we will meet at a mutually agreed place and time, usually away from any police premises, whilst off duty. I will ask you some questions relating to your experiences and perceptions as a police officer engaged on operational duties.

Our discussion (interview) will be digitally recorded. The interview will be transcribed at a later date. The vast majority of interviews will last no more than one hour. Occasionally



however, it may be necessary to seek a brief follow-up interview, either by telephone or face to face.

There is no budget for this research, nor any funding for the time that you complete the questionnaire or interview. Light refreshments will be available at the interview and the interviews will be conducted at a place, date and time of mutual agreement. During the transcription phase of this study and subsequent publication I may wish to use a number of verbatim quotes or extracts from the interview. I will ensure, as far as is possible, that these quotes or extracts maintain your anonymity and do not compromise confidentiality.

## **6. What will I have to do?**

Firstly; complete a questionnaire, then, at some later date be interviewed and answer a number of questions regarding your experiences and perceptions as an operational police officer, tutor or supervisor.

## **7. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

You will have to give up approximately 90 minutes of your own time with no financial reward. It is possible that when the results of this research are published it may generate debate within the service and it is possible based on history that the debate may cause negative comments or remarks to be published in Police Review and other police magazines.

## **8. What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

When this research began in 2005 there was little if any published research regarding dyslexia within the police service and wider criminal justice system. It was the researcher's experience that some dyslexic police officers were treated very well in the operational role; however it was reported that many dyslexic police officers experienced difficulty operationally and some resigned very early in their service. This research is believed to be the first structured academic examination of the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic officers, tutor constables, supervisors and managers in the UK.

There is no promise that this study will help you personally, but the information I get might help improve individual and organisational understanding of dyslexic adults in the police service, their tutors, supervisors and managers within the wider criminal justice system.

## **9. What if there is a problem?**

Any complaint about the way you have been dealt with during the study or any possible distress you might suffer will be addressed. The detailed information on this is given in Part 2

## **10. Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

Yes. All the information about your participation in this study will be kept confidential. The details are included in Part 2.

**11. Contact Details:**

Should you require further information regarding any aspect of this research please feel free to contact Andy Hill, at any time.

The principal researcher is Andrew (Andy) Paul Hill, Senior Lecturer in Policing & Criminal Justice, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Community & Criminal Justice Division at De Montfort University, Hawthorn Building, Leicester, LE1 9BH. Mobile Number: 07802 935223, Email: [aphill@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:aphill@dmu.ac.uk)

The research is being supervised by DR David Pollak, De Montfort University, Leicester, LE1 9BH. Office Number: 0116 257 7831, Email: [dpollak@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:dpollak@dmu.ac.uk)

**This completes Part 1 of the Information Sheet.**

**If the information in Part 1 has interested you and you are considering participation, please continue to read the additional information in Part 2 before making any decision.**

## Part 2

### 12. What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

If you withdraw from this study all of the data and personal information will be destroyed without delay. I may seek your permission to retain and use some elements of your contribution; however I will comply with your wishes. Your details will be removed and deleted from the secure IT storage device used to store the audio recordings, scanned questionnaires and subsequent transcriptions. You will receive written confirmation when this has been completed.

You can withdraw at any time and without offering any reason. This can be done in writing, via email or in person.

### 13. What if there is a problem?

If you have any concerns or wish to make a complaint regarding your participation in this research study, you should direct your concern or complaint to the principal researcher Andy Hill. If however your complaint relates to Andy Hill or you do not feel able for any reason to contact him you may contact his Research Supervisor, Dr David Pollak of De Montfort University. His contact details are included in Part 1 of this information sheet.

### 14. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes, as far as is reasonably practicable and with all due diligence on behalf of the principal researcher and university supervision team. All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. The collection, handling, storing, using or destroying of data will not contravene the legal or regulatory requirements of any part of the UK. Specifically the requirements of the Data Protection Act will be fully met regarding all data collected in this study. Prior to interview you will be invited to review and check for accuracy any information that the researcher has created and stored about you. You can request to see any information relating to you at anytime during this study and up to five years after it is completed.

Any disclosure by participants, other than those which amount to criminal conduct, will not be acted upon or reported by the researcher. This is so that the participant and researcher can have open and candid discussions without the fear of being reported for disclosing something inappropriate.

### 15. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of this research will be published initially in the form of a PhD thesis. Copies will be placed in the Library at De Montfort University in Leicester and in the National Police Library in Bramshill, Nr Reading. The submission of the thesis is expected to take place in late 2008. If you would like access to the thesis following submission please contact Andy Hill.

It is possible that further publication make take place, for example in police and academic journals both nationally and internationally.

Further publishing may take place at some point in the future; however it is the intention of the researcher that this study should be used to raise awareness of dyslexia within the police service and used to inform those engaged in the recruitment, training and development of dyslexic police officers in the UK criminal justice system. It is hoped that this study will be used to inform policy and decision makers at both the strategic and operational levels of the criminal justice service.

**16. Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research is the original and independent work of Andy Hill. The research is being conducted with and supervised by De Montfort University. The research was jointly funded in Year One by Thames Valley Police (TVP) and by Centrex, within the respective Study Sponsorship Schemes. Thereafter DMU will be funding the fee element of the research through to completion.

The research was initiated within the Bramshill Fellowship Scheme. This is a Home Office/Centrex supported police research scheme. There is no direct funding from this fellowship.

**17. Who has reviewed the study?**

This research study has been reviewed both by the PhD supervision team and by Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Human Research Ethics Committee at De Montfort University in the spring of 2006.

**18. Thank You.**

Unless you have any further questions, Thank You for taking the time to read this information sheet. I appreciate it very much. If you would now like to take part in this research study please sign and date the attached consent forms. Please sign **both** forms. You will be given a personal copy of the forms to take with you for your future reference.

**Andy Hill**

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2007**

## **Appendix 3**

## Consent Form

**Title of Project:** Policing Dyslexia: An Examination of Policy, Practice and Experience of Dyslexic Officers within the Criminal Justice System.

**Name of Researcher:** Andy Hill

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated (20/03/07) for the above research study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
  
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at anytime, without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.
  
3. I agree to the audio recording of any interviews.
  
4. I consent to the use of verbatim quotes in the final thesis and any subsequent publications by or on behalf of Andy Hill. I understand that I will not be identified in such publications.
  
5. I agree to take part in this study.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ of  
Participant.....Date.....Signature.....

Researcher.....  
Date.....Signature.....

Participant                      Identification                      Number                      and/or                      Name:  
.....

When completed, 1 for participant; 1 (original) for researcher site file.

## **Appendix 4**

Please return this form with your consent form in the pre-paid envelope

I would like the research questionnaire in the following format:

**Please tick your preference(s)**

As a Microsoft Word document emailed to me

As a Microsoft Word Document - sent to me on a floppy disk or pen drive

In hard copy on white A4 paper - Comic Sans font size 12

In Hard copy on pastel coloured A4 paper - Comic Sans font size 12

In an alternative format described below:

e.g. Audio file.....

.....

.....

Please feel free to ask for any format that works for YOU.

Andy Hill



## **Appendix 5**

Policing Dyslexia: An Examination of Policy, Practice and Experience of Dyslexic Police Officers within the Criminal Justice Office.

Please leave Blank:

Date Completed: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

\* Please **circle** your answer where given the option of Yes / No

a) First Name(s):

b) Last Name:

c) Preferred Name:

d) Age:

e) Sex:

f) Contact Telephone Number:

g) Email Address: @

h) Force:

i) Station:

j) Date of Joining the Police Service:

k) Date of Leaving the Police Service:

l) What is the **highest** level to which to which you have studied before or during your police service? GCSE / A or AS Level / Diploma / Degree / Higher Degree / Other  
Please briefly specify:

l) Have you ever been told that you are dyslexic as a result of screening or assessment test? Yes / No\*

If Yes, at what age were you most recently assessed? Years

m) What caused you to undertake any screening or assessment?

- i) If this was undertaken whilst you were serving as a police officer who made the arrangements for the screening or assessment?
- ii) Who funded the screening or assessment?

n) Have you disclosed or discussed the result of any screening or assessment with anyone in the police service at:

- i) Recruitment: Yes / No\*
- ii) Foundation or IPLDP initial training Yes / No\*
- iii) Stage 4/Accompanied patrol Yes / No\*
- iv) Independent Patrol Yes / No\*
- v) Other - Please give brief details
- vi) Who have you told: Tutor/Shift Member/Sgt/Insp/HR/Occupational Health/Not told anyone/Other; Please briefly specify:

o) If you have not formally disclosed or discussed your dyslexia with anyone within the service, please briefly explain why you have chosen not to do so:

p) Did you receive any Reasonable Adjustment during the **recruitment phase** of joining the police service? (e.g. were you allowed extra time in written tasks, allowed to use a computer or dictionary, etc) Yes / No\*

If yes, what allowances were made?

Did this help? Yes / No\* Please give brief details:

q) Were you allowed Reasonable Adjustment in **Stage 2 or IPLDP initial training**? Yes / No\*

If yes what were you allowed?

Did this help? Yes / No\* Please give brief details:

r) Were you allowed or offered any Reasonable Adjustment during your period of **Accompanied Patrol** or Stage 4? Yes / No\*

If yes, what were you allowed?

Did this help? Yes / No\* Please give brief details

s) Were you allowed or offered any Reasonable Adjustment during **Independent patrol**? Yes / No\*

If yes, what were you allowed?

Did this help? Yes / No\* Please give brief details

t) How many tutors did you work with during your accompanied patrol or Stage 4?

u) Was your ten week period of accompanied patrol extended? Yes / No\* If yes, how long was your total period of accompanied patrol? (inc initial 10 wks) Wks.

v) What 3 tasks or duties do you enjoy most as an operational police officer?

i)

ii)

iii)

w) What 3 tasks or duties to you not enjoy as an operational officer?

i)

ii)

iii)

x) To what extent, if any, has being dyslexic affected your ability to be an effective operational police officer?

y) Have you given evidence in any court since joining the police service? Yes / No\*  
If Yes, please give a brief description of your experience.

z) Is there anything else that you would like the researcher to know before the face to face interview takes place?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire, Please now return this form to me in the stamped addressed envelope provided. If you have any questions regarding this questionnaire or more generally regarding my research please contact me at: [aphill@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:aphill@dmu.ac.uk) or on 07802 935223 I look forward to meeting with you in the near future.

Andy Hill  
Researcher

## Appendix 6

Policing Dyslexia: An Examination of Policy, Practice and Experience of Dyslexic Police Officers within the Criminal Justice System.

Please leave Blank:

**Date Completed:** \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

\* Please **circle** your answer where given the option of Yes / No

a) First Name(s):

b) Last Name:

c) Preferred Name:

d) Age:

e) Sex:

f) Contact Telephone Number:

g) Email Address: @

h) Force:

i) Station:

j) Date of Joining the Police Service:

k) Date of Leaving the Police Service (Leave blank if currently serving) :

l) What is the **highest** level to which to which you have studied (not necessarily completed) before or during your police service?

OSPRE / GCSE / A or AS Level / Diploma / Degree / Higher Degree / Other

Please briefly specify:

l) Have you ever been told that you are dyslexic as a result of screening or assessment test? Yes / No\*

If Yes, at what age were you most recently assessed?                      Years

m) What made you decide to undertake any screening or assessment?

iii)     If this was undertaken whilst you were serving as a police officer who made the arrangements for the screening or assessment?

iv)     Who funded the screening or assessment?



n) Have you disclosed or discussed the result of any screening or assessment with anyone in the police service at:

- vii) Recruitment: Yes / No\*
  - viii) Foundation or IPLDP initial training Yes / No\*
  - ix) Stage 4/Accompanied patrol Yes / No\*
  - x) Independent Patrol Yes / No\*
  - xi) Other - Please give brief details:
- 
- xii) Who have you told about your dyslexia: Tutor / Shift Member / Sgt / Insp. / HR / Occupational Health / Not told anyone / Other;

What was/were their response(s):

o) If you have not formally or informally disclosed or discussed your dyslexia with anyone within the service, please briefly explain why you have chosen not to do so:

In the following questions the term Reasonable Adjustments is used. The term is taken from the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and relates to allowances that are made for people with some disabilities in learning and employment. Common examples

of Reasonable Adjustment include: allowing more time in text based assessments or tasks, allowing the use of a dictionary in assessments, the use of a computer or specialist software.

p) Did you receive any Reasonable Adjustment because of the dyslexia during the [recruitment phase](#) of joining the police service? Yes / No\*

If yes, what allowances were made?

Did this help? Yes / No\* Please give brief details:

q) Were you allowed Reasonable Adjustment in [Stage 2 or IPLDP initial training](#)? Yes / No\*

If yes what were you allowed?

Did this help? Yes / No\* Please give brief details:

r) Were you allowed or offered any Reasonable Adjustment during your period of [Accompanied Patrol](#) or [Stage 4](#)? Yes / No\*

If yes, what were you allowed?

Did this help? Yes / No / \* Please give brief details

s) Were you allowed or offered any Reasonable Adjustment during [Independent Patrol](#)? Yes / No\*

If yes, what were you allowed?

Did this help? Yes / No\* Please give brief details

t) How many tutors did you work with during your accompanied patrol or Stage 4?

u) Was your period of accompanied patrol extended? Yes / No\*

If yes, how long was your total period of accompanied patrol? (inc initial 10 wks)

v) What 3 tasks or duties do you most enjoy as an operational police officer?

i)

ii)

iii)

w) What 3 tasks or duties to you least enjoy as an operational officer?

i)

ii)

iii)

x) To what extent, if any, has being dyslexic affected your ability to be an effective operational police officer?

- y) Have you given evidence in any court since joining the police service? Yes / No\*  
If yes, please give a brief description of your experience including how it made you feel.
- z) Is there anything else that you would like the researcher to know before the face to face interview taking place?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire, Please now return this form to me in the stamped addressed envelope provided. If you have any questions regarding this questionnaire or more generally regarding my research please contact me at: [aphill@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:aphill@dmu.ac.uk) or on 07802 935223, I look forward to meeting with you in the near future.

Andy Hill  
Researcher

## **Appendix 7**

Name:..... Date:.....

Location:.....

Length of service:.....

Supplements:.....

**Start Time:**

Sequence may change based upon interviewee responses however all questions will be used in Interview.

	Question	Notes
Q1	What made you decide to become a police officer? Introduce dyslexia only if it is not discussed by interviewee	Initial engagement, encourage comment and dialogue...active listening....
Q2(a)	I want to talk about your thoughts and feelings of telling others connected with the police service of your dyslexia. What term would you use to describe the telling of others? 'Disclosure' - 'Coming Out' etc.	Gentle Probing of examples including events, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, behaviours, frequency, positive - neutral - negative experiences, etc
Q2(b)		<b>IF NOT OUT THEN GENTLY PROBE WHY?</b>
Q2(c)	Tell me about your most memorable experience of telling another/others connected with the police service? How did this make you feel?  Tell me about any other experiences and perceptions that you can recall?	

Q3	What was your most recent experience of telling others?	
Q4	<p>How much control did you/do you have over the sharing of this information?</p> <p>How does this make you feel?</p> <p>What has the effect of sharing of information had upon you and the way that you feel?</p>	<p>Gentle Probing of examples including events, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, behaviours etc</p> <p>Good and Bad?</p>
<p>Q5 (a)</p> <p>Q5 (b)</p> <p>Q5 (c)</p>	<p>Have you had any other experience of disclosing a hidden or personal characteristic or attribute within the police service? E.g. sexuality etc?</p> <p>If so, what was/were your experiences and feelings?</p> <p>How would you compare the experience and responses within the service at all levels?</p>	
Q6	If you have disclosed outside of the police service what was your experience and feelings?	



	How would compare the experience and response to that of disclosure within the police service?	
Q7	Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about you experience and perceptions of disclosing within the police service?	
Q8	Moving on now to a broader questions - What do you understand dyslexia to be?	
Q9	How does being dyslexic affect your life?	
Q10	Would you describe dyslexia as a disability?  Do you consider yourself to be disabled?	
Q11 (a)	How does being dyslexic affect your work as a police officer? (Both Feelings & Experience) Positive & Negative	Probe response

Q11 (b)	How would you describe your experience of being a dyslexic police officer?	
Q12	<p>What personal techniques or adjustments have (did) <b>you</b> made to enable you to deal with being a police officer?</p> <p>How did you develop these?</p> <p>Did you receive any help or support in developing these techniques?</p>	Probe effects Positive - Neutral - Negative
Q13	Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your feelings and experiences of being a dyslexic police officer?	
Q14	<p>The final area that I would like to talk about relates to your experiences and perceptions of Disability Discrimination Legislation.</p> <p>Has the extension of Disability Discrimination Legislation,</p>	If so - What & How?

	specifically the DDAR 2003 and DDA 2005 had any impact upon their day-to-day work as police officers?	
Q15	What do you understand by the term Reasonable Adjustment?	
Q16	<p>What are your experiences of RA?</p> <p>What was provided?</p> <p>By whom?</p> <p>What training did you receive?</p> <p>Was it compatible with the Police/CJS IT systems?</p>	Positive - Neutral - Negative
Q17	How were you treated by: Those who organised it, Those who provided it? Colleagues, supervisors and or managers?	
Q18	What was your experience and feelings regarding this whole process?	
Q19	Is there anything else that you	

	would like to tell me or an experience, perception or feeling related to being a dyslexic police officer?	
--	---	--

End Time:

Duration:

**Notes and Immediate Reflections:**

## **Appendix 8**

Name:..... Date:.....

Location:.....

Length of service:.....

Supplements:.....

**Start Time:**

Sequence may change based upon interviewee responses however all questions will be used in Interview.

	Question	Notes
Q1	What made you decide to become a police officer? Introduce dyslexia only if it is not discussed by interviewee	Initial engagement, encourage comment and dialogue...active listening....
Q2	Moving on now to a broader questions - What do you understand dyslexia to be?	
Q3	Would you describe dyslexia as a disability?  Do you consider yourself to be disabled?	
Q4	How does being dyslexic affect your life away from work?	Gentle Probing of examples including events, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, behaviours etc  Good and Bad?
Q5	How does being dyslexic affect your work as a police officer? (Both Feelings & Experience) Positive & Negative	Statements, Tickets, Files, PNC, PNB etc

Q6	What personal techniques or adjustments have (did) <b>you</b> made to enable you to deal with being a police officer?	How did you develop these?  Did you receive any help or support in developing these techniques?
Q7	I want to talk about your thoughts and feelings of telling others connected with the police service of your dyslexia. What term would you use to describe the telling of others? 'Disclosure' - 'Coming Out' etc.	How did the process make you feel?  <b>IF NOT OUT GENTLY PROBE...</b>
Q8	Tell me about your most memorable experience of telling another/others connected with the police service? How did this make you feel?  What was your most recent experience of telling others?	Explore other experiences and perceptions of disclosure.
Q9	How much control did you/do you have over the sharing of your disclosure?	How did this make you feel?  What has the effect of sharing of information had upon you and the way that you feel?
Q10	Have you had any other experience of disclosing a hidden or personal characteristic or attribute within the police service? E.g. sexuality etc?	If so, what was/were your experiences and feelings?  How would you compare the experience and responses within the service at all levels?

Q11	<p>If you have disclosed outside of the police service what was your experience and feelings?</p> <p>How would compare the experience and response to that of disclosure within the police service?</p>	
Q12	<p>Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about you experience and perceptions of disclosing within the police service?</p>	
Q13	<p>Moving onto the final question area now,</p> <p>What specific dyslexia support has or did the police service offer you? (RA?)</p> <p>What are your experiences of RA?</p> <p>What was provided? By whom?</p> <p>What training did you receive?</p> <p>Was it compatible with the Police/CJS IT systems?</p>	
Q14	<p>What Experience do you have of giving evidence in Court?</p>	
Q15	<p>How do you feel that you have been treated by the police service in terms of dyslexia?</p>	



Q16	Is there anything else that you would like to tell me or an experience, perception or feeling related to being a dyslexic police officer?	
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End Time:

Duration:

**Notes and Immediate Reflections:**